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THE
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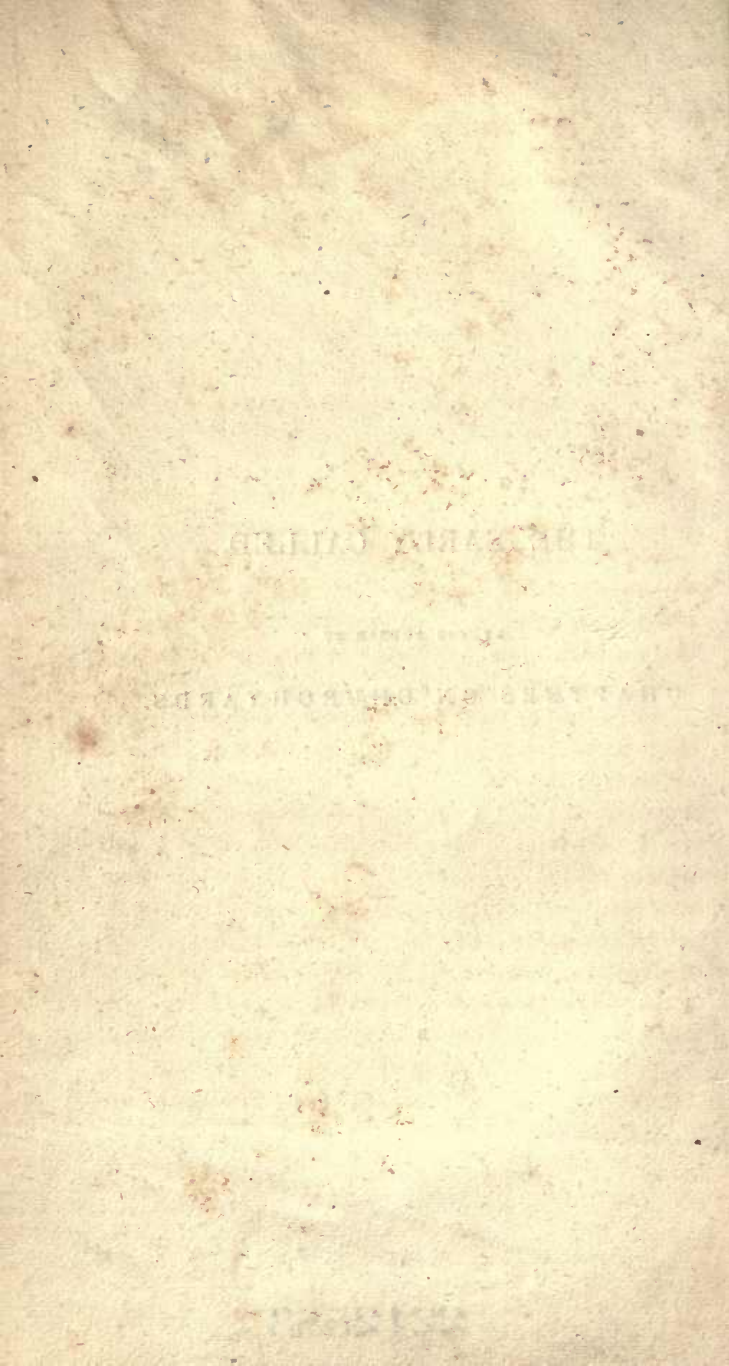
THE EARLY CALLED.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

CHAPTERS ON CHURCHYARDS.

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CHAPTER I.

“Leaves have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither at the north wind’s breath,
And stars to set ; but all—
Thou hast all seasons for thine own, Oh Death !”

MRS. HEMANS.

Four years ago, towards the close of the last winter of my sojourn in Italy, I became acquainted at Naples with an English family, consisting of three persons, an elderly widow lady, and her orphan nephew and niece—the children of an only sister, bequeathed on the death of their parents, while still infants, to their aunt’s guardianship.

Mrs. Arden’s childless widowhood had been fondly devoted to the trust so sacredly confided, and the orphans committed to her care became to her as her own children, and repaid her maternal tenderness with the fulness of filial love, and the promise in mind and person of a beautiful maturity. Lovely and alike they were in mind and person those youthful creatures, when I first saw them, a few weeks after their arrival at Naples ; and, but for my knowledge of the cause that had brought them thither, little should I have suspected any fatal indications in the transparent complexion, and bright bloom of the sister’s cheek, and in the liquid lustre of her soft blue eye. But so it was.

The seal of death was there ; and although on the first symptoms of disease Mrs. Arden had hurried with her darling to a softer climate, little hope had been held out to her that the change would lead to permanent recovery, for the seeds of the insidious malady had been a part of the orphans' inheritance derived to them from both parents, who had fallen its victims within two years of each other. The children had also inherited the marked and peculiar character of beauty which had distinguished their deceased mother—that fearful beauty—so touching ! so unearthly ! and yet, like roses on a sepulchre, masking decay and death. With what unspeakable tenderness—what unremitting care, had their maternal guardian watched over the infancy and childhood of those two beautiful creatures, so endeared tenfold by their orphan state, and by the circumstances which made their hold on life so far more precarious than is even the common tenure of mortality.

“ They were such little angels ! ” she once said to me, when speaking of their bygone years—“ when they knelt before me, side by side, with their little hands joined together, and their sweet eyes lifted up so reverently, and both young voices mingling into one silver sound, as they said their evening prayer ! Oh, I have looked at them till my eyes were dim with tears, and I felt as if I *must* resign them—as if they had but to spread their wings, and finish in Heaven the last strains of their concluding hymn ! ”

Poor Mrs. Arden ! It was thus she poured out to

me the fulness of her heart but a few evenings before the partial fulfilment of that sad and tender foreboding in the death of her sweet niece. Unavailing was the balmy breath of the sweet south—unavailing the physician's skill, and the solicitude of devoted affection! The youngest of the orphan pair—the fair Ann Ross—died, and was buried in the land of the stranger; and when I looked at the young Herbert, in his deep mourning for her to whom his heart had clung with more than a brother's love, with whose life his life had been bound up by such ties as the peculiar circumstances of their orphan state could only have entwined—when I gazed on the youthful mourner's tall and slender form—the feminine delicacy of his complexion—the varying colour of his cheek—and the sickly whiteness of his long thin fingers, so strongly contrasted by the black sleeve, my heart was wrung by a painful conviction that on him also the Death Angel had set the awful seal—that he too was doomed to pass away in the first flower of his youth, and to be laid in his sister's grave, before the young cypresses that he had planted with his own hand, round the marble urn on which her name was inscribed, should spread their tender fibres in the consecrated mould, and put forth their earliest shoots.

I was mistaken, however. The young man's days were not so nearly numbered. Life was strong within him, and disease had made as yet no serious progress in a constitution, the delicate organization of which had but evinced its sympathy with the acute sensibilities of a

moral frame of still finer workmanship. Herbert Ross felt and believed, when he laid his only sister in that untimely grave, that his young life, henceforth companionless and joyless, was a boon, the continuance of which was little to be desired at the hands of that mysterious Providence, whose decree had then apparently gone forth against himself, the lonely one and last of his doomed race. But the grief of youth, poignant, and passionate, and bitter as it is, eats not into the heart like the sorrows of later life, and the yet unbroken spirit will struggle into light and gladness, in spite of the remorseful tenderness, which deems it even sinful to take comfort. And life, prolonged life, was still a precious boon to Herbert Ross, for the youth's mind was full of ardent and aspiring day-dreams—the sunny brightness of which had been overshadowed for a time only by the calamity which had befallen him. Not towards worldly honours, or worldly wealth, or any of the vain glories of this world were directed the aspirations of that young fervent mind—not more deeply imbued with sensibility, than with the religious feeling which controls and sanctifies what is otherwise too apt to degenerate into amiable weakness.

By the desire of his maternal guardian, more than seconded by his own free will and choice, Herbert had been early destined for the ministry of the gospel; and though Mrs. Arden had been deterred from sending him to a public school, by the early delicacy of his constitution, he had been carefully prepared by private tuition for the great duties he was at a proper age

to take upon himself; and the time was now come when (if his return to England was permitted) he was to enter on the course of university studies.

Yet a few months the aunt and the nephew lingered on in the land of "the olive and the myrtle," till the apparently complete re-establishment of the young man's health warranted their return to England. Then taking their last farewell of the dear kindred dust left to moulder among that of strangers—(who but those who have felt can appreciate the bitterness of that final parting?)—they embarked, and sailed away for ever from the classic shores of Italy, about the time that I also quitted Naples, in pursuance of a long projected plan of continued travel, over far distant countries.

At Constantinople, where I made some stay, and received letters from England, one among them (not the least welcome of the many) conveyed to me the gratifying intelligence, that after a prosperous voyage, during which the health of her nephew had continued to improve, Mrs. Arden had arrived with him at their country residence in Warwickshire, and shortly afterwards had had the satisfaction of seeing him comfortably installed, under the most advantageous circumstances, in his college rooms, at Cambridge.

No stipulation of regular correspondence had been entered into between Mrs. Arden and myself, and any such would indeed have been of impossible observance, during the continued wanderings of my next three years, so that I wholly lost sight of my

lately acquired friends, and though for a time the remembrance of them often presented itself to my mind, I confess with shame, that it recurred less and less frequently, as perpetual change of place and scene, crowded on my mind successive objects of interest and attention; and when at the conclusion of my third year of vagrancy, I turned my face homewards, and found myself again on English ground, and in the English home, which had never been forgotten, or less loved, among the fairest of foreign scenes, my thoughts—my mind—my heart—were for a time so engrossed by that dear home, and all it contained and was associated with, that still no flash of recollection brought before me the images of those two persons from whom I had parted at Naples but three years back, with feelings of most affectionate interest.

Summer was drawing towards a close when I reached my native country, and after a few weeks continuance at my paternal home, where the return of the long absent son and brother had made a festival of family rejoicing, I left it with regret to prove the virtues of the mineral baths of Buxton, for a rheumatic complaint contracted during my travels, for which they had been strongly recommended to me.

There was little company at the watering place when I arrived there, and but few persons located in the hotel where I took up my abode—and when the dinner hour assembled us at the public table, I glanced round it in some dismay, at the unpromising aspect of the half dozen individuals, who with myself composed the

party ;—a pair of lean, long visaged, upright gentlewomen, of a *very certain* age, whom I set down for maiden sisters—and for their niece, a high shouldered girl with a mop head, and red elbows, who was carefully flanked on either side, as we took our seats by the aforesaid grim duennas ; a quizzzy couple, self-proclaimed as man and wife by their tender interchange of “Mr. P., my dear,” and “Mrs. P., my love !” and a long, emaciated, fretful looking elderly gentleman, stuffed out with half a dozen showy waistcoats, with a face as yellow as a daffodil, a turquoise brooch, and an emererald ring—and addressed as “Sahib !” by the Asiatic servant who stood behind his chair with downcast eyes and folded arms.

I looked round me with a despairing gaze, and my anticipations by no means brightened as the meal proceeded in unsocial—English silence—or cold and formal interchange, of the most indispensable courtesies. The maiden sisters spoke only in admonitory whispers to their awkward charge—with an occasional nudge on either side, as she intruded her red peaked elbows into their balloon sleeves. The married pair seriously addressed themselves to the business of eating, and recommending various dishes to each other, and the East India Colonel (he could be no less) rated his Asiatic attendant all dinner time, in half English, half Hindostanee, for having left behind a certain indispensable bottle of Cayenne. I was already debating with myself how long it was possible for mortal endurance to hold out, condemned to such asso-

ciation—when just as the cloth had been removed, the sound of wheels was heard rapidly approaching, and in another minute the running of waiters and a bustle at the door of the hotel, denoted the blest certainty of a fresh arrival.

All eyes were attracted to the open door of the eating-room, by which the new comer must necessarily pass—as marshalled by the obsequious master of the hotel towards the upper apartments. And mine, alas ! fell in blank disappointment, after resting for a second on the figure of a lady dressed in deep mourning, apparently elderly and infirm, for she leant on the arm of her attendant, and slowly followed the bustling landlord. “But after all she looks like a lady,” thought I to myself, glancing round at the present company—and I was not among the least curious to learn the name of the new comer—when at the tea table (at which she did not make her appearance) the book of arrivals was requested, and handed round for general information. It circulated in silence, and last came my turn of inspection, but “the party in the parlour” were soon electrified by my sudden start and exclamation at sight of the newly inscribed name. It was that of Mrs. Arden.

Throughout the range of mental phenomena, there are few more assimilating to the marvellous than the sudden and perfect distinctness with which scenes and circumstances, long past and long forgotten, are often recalled in their most minute details, and crowded as it were into a moment’s memory,—though having

perhaps occupied successive weeks or months in their actual occurrence, by some chance-word or name unexpectedly pronounced, some flower, or perfume, or a few notes of music, connected with the buried past by links of association that, like those of an electric chain, communicate the vivifying spark with inconceivable rapidity.

In a moment I was transported to sunny Italy, to the pleasant villa at Castel-a-Mare, which had been occupied by my English friends. I sat with them on its seaward terrace in the cool of evening, gathering up the fallen orange flowers, to lay on the lap of a fair dying girl, who thanked me with a sad sweet smile as her head dropt languidly on the shoulder of her young brother, whose arm, as he sat beside her, encircled her slight form. And there was the guardian aunt sorrowfully gazing on her adopted orphans—and then a bell tolled!—the vesper bell of a neighbouring convent—and the scene changed—and I stood by a lonely grave, in the English burying-ground—a lonely grave, distinguished by an urn of white marble, and a few young cypresses—and again—my friends were with me—*two* only of the *three*—and of those two, *one*—sinking fast into his sister's grave. The beautiful boy!—scarce youth. But from him the death-shadow passed away—and health restrung his frame—and then, again, the scene shifted—and lo! the surviving *two* stood, wafting their farewell from a ship's deck. The white canvass swelled and filled in the favouring breeze—and the good ship sailed away, and I watched her course

till she lessened to a speck in the offing—and when that also disappeared, I found myself standing with the arrival-book in my hand, and my eyes riveted on the newly written name, the sound of which was but dying on my lips as I returned to actual perception of the external world.

Hastily I rang for the waiter, and despatched him with my card to Mrs. Arden's apartments, having scribbled on it with a pencil a petition to be admitted to take my coffee with her. "But where," I added, in my unreflective gladness, "where is my friend Herbert?"—"Fagging hard at college," I replied as inconsiderately to my own query as the waiter departed on his mission: but he had scarcely disappeared, when a thought suggested itself—a fearful thought! It was vacation time—Mrs. Arden was alone—ill—in deep mourning—*where was Herbert?*

My first glance at the face of my respected friend, as I entered her apartment, changed conjecture into certainty—into fatal certainty. She held out her hand to me in silence, (all eloquent silence,) and her lip quivered as she turned away from my inquiring look, and, leaning upon the mantelpiece, gave way for a few moments to the relief of tears.

"God comfort you, my dear madam!" was the only greeting I had power to speak, when, with glistening eyes, but a composed and placid countenance, she again turned towards me, with a kind pressure of the hand, that still held hers, and full well she knew that I needed not to be told the cause of her

affliction, or to what event she alluded, when, with an upward glance of meek resignation, she softly said—"Yes, my good friend! they are now *both* angels in Heaven."

From that evening of our first sad meeting to the conclusion of my three weeks' stay at Buxton, there were few days of which I did not spend the greater part in the society of my valued friend; and, in the course of those quiet confidential hours, it was her chief solace to talk with me of her departed dear ones, and especially, with the fond minuteness of grief in its first freshness, of him so recently committed to the grave.

My interest for the beautiful boy I had known at Naples under such affecting circumstances was vividly reawakened by those details of his short life, and its concluding scene, so deeply imprinted on the heart's memory of her, who, in full confidence of my affectionate sympathy, was wont to pour out to me her treasured recollections, with that careless effusion of feeling, in the indulgence of which the real mourner finds more relief than in a connected and formal narrative.

To me, however, it has been a pleasing occupation to build up, as it were, from those unarranged fragments, a simple monument to the memory of Herbert Ross—a short record of the uneventful but pathetic passages of his brief earthly career. Turn from it, worldly, fashionable reader! It would be to you tasteless and insipid, as simple cottage fare to the palate of an experienced epicure—as a quiet country life, com-

pared with your artificial system of society. Kind and gentle reader!—you whose sensibility to the common pains and common pleasures of your fellow-creatures, to their real joys and sorrows, is not yet vitiated by false excitement, or rendered callous by worldly selfishness—look with an indulgent eye over “the short and simple annals” of a life which has left no trace on earth beside this humble record, and the tender recollections of a few unforgetting hearts. It is, indeed, “an owre true tale,” and I tell it you as “’twas told to me,” (though not in regular sequence,) as nearly as possible in *her* words, whose language was that of the heart, and can hardly fail, therefore, of touching some sympathetic chord in yours.

“My dear Herbert,” said Mrs. Arden, “entered upon the course of university studies, which was to complete his preparation for holy orders, with the fairest prospects—the happiest and purest views. His health, as you may remember, Mr. Lindsay, had so materially improved, during the latter part of our stay in Italy, and (as I wrote you) on our homeward voyage, as to afford reasonable ground for hope, that, when the tall and slender frame had attained its full stature, his constitution would have power to throw off any lurking taint of hereditary malady, and settle into permanent vigour.

“‘Fear not for me, my dear aunt,’ was his cheerful reply on the eve of his departure for Cambridge, to my reiterated charges about his health, and fond entreaties that he would not endanger it by too intense and unre-

mitting application—‘Fear not for me, my dear aunt, that I shall overtask myself; with the end for which I labour full in view, I shall find the path pleasant and the progress easy; and for this frail frame of mine, already so wonderfully reinvigorated, if the master to whose service I devote myself has work for me to do, will he not supply “strength sufficient” for me?’

“My heart sank within me as he spoke thus, for the deep flush that suffused his cheek, and the kindling lustre of his eye, were tokens fatally familiar to me. But if indeed the fiat had gone forth, what human power could prevail against it? I committed him to God, and he departed.

“During the early part of his first term, he continued to write me the most regular and comforting accounts of his perfect health—his moderation in study—(I feared no other excess on his part)—and of his allowing himself (in observance of the promise I had exacted) an ample portion of time for sleep and exercise. ‘And yet, indeed, my dear aunt,’ he sometimes added, ‘you make me too slothful, too self-indulgent, and I believe unnecessarily so, for my serious occupations are those most delightful to me, and could not therefore be physically injurious, though permitted to encroach a little upon those hours of sleep and idleness, which abstract such precious portions from the irredeemable account of time. But you have my promise, and I adhere to it faithfully.’

“Alas! that he had continued to do so; but gradually, though he never relaxed in the frequency of

writing, his letters became shorter and less satisfactory—rarely touching on, and at last wholly omitting, those minute personal details so deeply interesting to me; and when I questioned and even urged him on the subject, he briefly assured me he was ‘Well, quite well;’ but no longer reiterated the pledge I had so fondly exacted. The inference was obvious. His ardent and enthusiastic nature had thrown off those shackles of prudential restraint, to which, for my sake only, he had submitted, for a season, and from the acknowledgment of his tutor and other college friends I learnt, in confirmation of my fears, that his days and nights were devoted to the most intense application, with scarcely the intermission of a few hours grudgingly yielded to the demands of nature. ‘But his health continues, to all appearance, uninjured,’ was the assurance added to these alarming reports. ‘There are no indications of debility about him, of an overtasked mind, or a failing body—depend upon it, you are distressing yourself without cause. He will live to rank high among the most distinguished for knowledge and usefulness.’

“I endeavoured to take comfort in these assurances and anticipations of my dear Herbert’s friends; but oh! how hollow are such comforts to the heart of a mother who trembles for the life of a dear and only child!—and was not Herbert as a son to me?

“I was, however, sensible that farther importunity would but distress, without restraining him in his now determined career. ‘I kept silence,’ therefore, ‘though

it was pain and grief to me,' on the unprofitable subject, and awaited with what composure I could assume the approaching vacation, which would at least enable me to form my own judgment of the truth of those flattering assurances I had received from himself and others.

“He came, and the first day of his return relieved me from a load of apprehension. He looked almost as I could have desired, far better than I had hoped to see him. In person, indeed, still slender and flexile as a young cypress; but then his tall form had shot up some inches since our last parting; and if his complexion was still that of almost feminine delicacy, it could have acquired no healthful bronze during the course of his sedentary labours, and it argued well for the future, that at least his constitution did not appear to have lost ground in the severe ordeal to which it had been subjected. In mind and heart I found him as he had ever been—even as you remember him, Mr. Lindsay, in the days of his beautiful boyhood—the purest, the most affectionate, the most endearing and interesting of created beings. And his intellectual powers, which were, I believe, of the first order, had expanded to a degree that surpassed even the sanguine expectations of his first tutor, our worthy rector, Mr. Wilmot.

“The first few days of his return were devoted almost entirely to me, and to revisiting every spot of ‘dear Merivale,’ as he was ever wont to term the house I so fondly hoped he would inherit, which had been

more particularly the scene of his boyish and youthful pleasures. But among them, his most cherished haunts were those associated with the memory of his lost sister—and often, during his stay at Merivale, would he steal away with his book to an arbour they had built together, from whence, over the sweetbrier-hedge which divided it from a small paddock, he could fondle and feed her old white pony, who had his run for life in luxurious idleness.

“You have often smiled, Mr. Lindsay, at the romantic fancies of ‘the young dreamer,’ as you used to call my poor Herbert. You read him well; and the natural enthusiasm of his character, acquiring strength with years, and becoming more concentrated as it was more carefully repressed, gained at last a morbid ascendancy in the moral system. From his very infancy my Herbert, though at all times sweet-tempered, and often innocently gay and playful, was of a serious and thoughtful nature—loving to steal away by himself, and spent whole hours in the woods surrounding our house, or by the brook side, under pretence of angling. But his fishing-basket was brought home for the most part empty, and his tackle in a state little creditable to the young disciple of Isaac Walton, whose ‘Complete Angler’ was his darling companion; and contained evidence, on its fly-leaves and on every spot of blank paper, that the youthful fisherman was more emulous of his master’s poetic vein, than of proficiency in his favourite sport.

“But we seldom ventured to jest with him on the

subject of his unsuccessful wanderings, or to pry into the innocent mystery of his poetic secrets—his heightened colour and often glistening eye evincing on such occasions that painful shyness so generally characteristic of deep and acute sensibility. Time and thought, and solitary studies, had but fed and concentrated the secret flame, feeding it with high hopes and lofty aspirings, and glorious visions, but not of *this world's* glories.

“We had not been long together before I began to perceive, that if no unfavourable change had taken place in Herbert’s bodily health, the tone of his mind had undergone alteration (and that of a disquieting nature) during his college residence. There was an increased degree of excitability about him. He fell more frequently, even in the social circle, into fits of long and deep abstraction; and if an opportunity occurred, seldom failed to steal away to his books or solitary musings, and I was not long in discovering that some change had taken place in his religious views, and in the sober and rational purpose with which he had hitherto looked forward to his sacred destination.

“I found that his few college associates had been selected among a set of persons assuming to themselves the designation of ‘serious young men;’ and that with a little knot of these—highly gifted and of unquestionable moral character, though far gone in Calvinistic error—Herbert had associated himself, not only during his short intervals of relaxation, but in theological studies and religious exercises, the fruit of which in-

tercourse had been to unsettle and perplex his mind, exciting in it doubts and scruples, not only on doctrinal points, but respecting the justifiableness of entering upon the ministry with *any* contingent views of temporal advantage—the presentation to the small living of Merivale having been promised to Herbert by the relation in whose gift it was, *after* his decision on taking holy orders, and it was in fact held for him by our friend Mr. Wilmot until such time as he should be qualified to take upon himself the sacred responsibility. Except the small estate of Merivale, I had little in my power to bequeath to my adopted son—whose trifling patrimonial inheritance would have been insufficient to enable him to reside in that endeared home, without the additional income of the living in question. The unsolicited and unexpected promise had been accepted by my dear Herbert with ardent gratitude, for on the prospect so extended to him, how many and how delightful were the paths of spiritual and temporal usefulness that would lay before him. With a heart and head full of these pure hopes and pious views, he went to college. Alas ! that the intervention of mistaken zeal should have disturbed the moral calm based on so irreproachable a purpose.

“It was with considerable uneasiness that I became gradually aware of the mischief fermenting in his ardent and enthusiastic mind, and I lost no time in communicating to Mr. Wilmot the result of my observations. He entered warmly into my fears and feelings, and from that time lost no opportunity of

being alone with his late pupil, and of engaging him in confidential discussion of his newly conceived doubts and conscientious scruples. Herbert had always felt great attachment, and entertained high respect for his venerable instructor, knowing him to be indeed the faithful and zealous servant of his Heavenly Master. This renewed intercourse between tutor and pupil was therefore not uninfluential with the latter, and I parted with him, on his return to Cambridge, with sanguine hope that the happier frame of mind and fixedness of purpose he had latterly regained, would not again be disturbed or shaken by the wild and speculative theories of that 'zeal without experience' so generally tending towards dangerous error—fanaticism, or infidelity.

"Too soon, however, the constrained and ambiguous style of his letters gave me reason to fear that he was relapsing into his former state of disquietude, and my reawakened anxiety was cruelly aggravated by the report of two young cantabs, with whom I found myself in company at the house of a neighbouring gentleman. They spoke in terms of high respect and encomium of the moral and intellectual qualities of my dear Herbert, but lamented that, at his first entrance in the university, he had been thrown into the society of a set of men, who, however distinguished by their abilities, and sincere in their religious professions, were far gone in sectarian errors, and justly amenable to the charge of pharasaical presumption in their outward assumption of peculiar sanctity and seriousness, and of

a conventional language, by which, as by a sort of freemasonry, they distinguished the individuals of their party.

“With the most talented and distinguished of these young aspirants, a Mr. Melcomb, Herbert had linked himself in intimate friendship; and I heard with dismay, that the former, having in his own case given up high expectations in the church, with the purpose of devoting himself to missionary labours in far distant lands, was using his powerful influence with my nephew to detach him from the rationally pious views with which he had hitherto looked forward to ordination, and associate him in his own projected wanderings.

“In aggravation of this disquieting intelligence, I gathered from the reluctant avowals of my young informants, that many persons of Herbert’s general acquaintance, themselves included, had been of late struck by his personal alteration, and the strong indications of over excitement and feverish illness which had been for some time past apparent in him.

“You may better imagine than I can describe the thoughts and feelings with which I returned to my home that night; and penned before I slept (or rather before I sought my sleepless bed) a note to the good man, so affectionately interested for Herbert, to whom I had resorted in my former perplexity, requesting the favour of an early visit from him the day ensuing. He found me almost incapable, from agitation, of explaining to him my renewed cause for anxiety, so

fearfully had it been increased, by the contents of a letter, brought by that morning's post. A few straggling lines in an unsteady hand, which I could scarcely recognise as that of my poor Herbert, informed me, with affectionate precaution, that he was ill—'very ill, certainly—but he hoped not dangerously—and that—at all events—if—even—' And then broke off abruptly the almost illegible scrawl, to which Mr. L., his friendly tutor, had subjoined the distressing information that my poor nephew's affectionate endeavour to communicate the tidings of his illness to me in his own handwriting, had been arrested, by a violent paroxysm of the disease, which had assumed the formidable character of brain fever. Under such circumstances, there needed not the cautiously worded intimation with which Mr. L.'s postscript concluded, to make me fully aware of my poor Herbert's imminent danger, or to decide me on setting out for Cambridge within two hours from the receipt of that terrible letter, accompanied by Mr. Wilmot, who hastily made his arrangements for the journey.

"I will not attempt to describe the feelings with which I drew near the place and moment which were to end my dread uncertainty as to the *one* great question 'life or death?' *That* answered by the blessed words—'He still lives'—I could gather little more to cheer or to encourage me in the after report of the medical men who were in attendance on my poor sufferer. For more than ten agonizing days he struggled on through alternate stages of fierce delirium and

death-like stupor. But the crisis was favourable. The fever was at length subdued, and though reduced to a state of more than infant weakness, my Herbert was pronounced out of actual danger, and his ultimate restoration to be mainly dependent on the care which should be taken, during a tedious convalescence, to keep him in a state of perfect tranquillity of mind and body. Immediately on our arrival at Cambridge, he had been removed, by consent of his physician, to a private lodging, and I was the more thankful for this arrangement, when it became a point of the first importance to guard him from the slightest agitation—and from every sight or sound, object or person, in the remotest degree likely to produce it. Among the many and frequent inquiries for my poor Herbert, his friend Mr. Melcomb was the most constant, and certainly not the least anxiously interested. During the season of pressing and imminent danger, I had had neither thought nor moment to spare from the one engrossing object; but when the dread crisis had terminated in a favourable change, I saw Mr. Melcomb, and though in several subsequent interviews with him I found myself, in spite of preconceived opinion, irresistibly charmed by his amiable and engaging manners, characterised though they were by the conventional language of his party; and though I did full justice to his purity of intention, intellectual powers, and sincere affection for my nephew, I felt but the more confirmed in my determination to prevent if possible all intercourse between him and Herbert, during the interval

that must still elapse before the latter should have regained sufficient strength to warrant his removal to Merivale.

“As my nephew slowly revived to consciousness of his late danger and his actual state, and began to make faint inquiries for those who he was well assured had been kindly concerned about him, I did not feel myself justified in withholding from him the knowledge, that his friend Mr. Melcomb had been among the most anxious of the daily inquirers. Reluctantly I pronounced the name—and fearfully awaited the remark or request it might call forth. But it was heard in silence—only with a deep sigh, and an almost imperceptible motion of the lips—and after a moment, the invalid half turned round upon his pillow, softly murmuring to himself, ‘Poor Melcomb! it is all over now; and then, as if exhausted by this feeble effort, he closed his eyes, and spoke no more for hours.

“Neither, for many days, did he renew the subject, which I by no means felt it incumbent on me to remind him of, though Mr. Melcomb began to plead with increased urgency for admittance to his friend’s sick chamber.

“Our medical advisers, however, (having necessarily been made aware of Herbert’s peculiar circumstances,) declared unhesitatingly, their opinion that strong and long continued over-excitement and agitation of mind, acting on a most excitable constitution, had brought on the so nearly fatal crisis; and that his life and reason still hung in such un-

even balance, that the slightest jar might be partially or wholly fatal. 'Let him,' they said, 'see no one but yourself, and his worthy old tutor who has shared your anxious task, during the short remainder of his present stay at Cambridge—and the moment he can be moved with safety, take him back with you to the home of his youth, and *keep him* there—far from this place and from his late associates—until he shall at least have recovered as much physical health as may be accompanied, we will hope, by a moral tone less morbidly liable than at present to injurious influence.'

"The first part of this friendly advice I cautiously communicated to the dear patient, and unspeakably was my mind relieved when he calmly replied, after a pause of deep reflection—'Be it so, my dear aunt. Tell this to Melcomb. Tell him it *may be better* we should NOT MEET NOW. Hereafter—if my life should be prolonged—but *not now—not yet*.—Tell him he shall hear from me when I can guide a pen firmly, and write calmly—and till then, and for ever—God bless him !'

"We were at length permitted to depart, and by short and slow stages our dear charge was safely conveyed to Merivale, and I had the comfort of seeing him once more established in our pleasant home. Still so languid and enfeebled as to require support in his few steps from the carriage to the hall door, he stopt on the familiar threshold, and looked about him with an expression so peculiar, so made up of quiet gladness and gratitude, and other thoughts, not of this world

surely, that it struck to my heart a shuddering consciousness of the feelings and forebodings then passing in his, and the words with which I would have welcomed him home again, died inaudible on my lips.

“So tedious and almost imperceptible was his progress towards recovery, that I should scarcely have ascertained it, but by comparison of its weekly stages; from his first removal from the couch in his own dressing room to that in my boudoir for a few afternoon hours, to his re-establishment at his favourite bay window in the library and general resumption of all his in-door habits. The regaining of farther liberty was still, we saw, to be a work of time, and the patient invalid murmured not that his enjoyment of out-door exercise was long restricted to carriage airings and a few turns at intervals on the broad gravel walk under our south windows.

“As the summer advanced, however—the last year’s summer—his amendment more visibly progressed, and I should have looked forward with sanguine expectation to his perfect restoration, but for a mysterious something—an indefinable change in his general manner—in the expression of his countenance, and even in the tone of his voice—which filled me with vague uneasiness, and fears I scarcely dared to analyze.

“Mild and thoughtful had been at all times my Herbert’s character, but innocently cheerful too, and enthusiastically ardent in all his favourite pursuits—and it had been his delight especially to talk over with me (his confidant from childhood) all his hopes of hap-

piness and usefulness in that station of life which had been so entirely the selection of his heart and judgment. From the period of our return home he never on any occasion reverted to the subject, or made allusion to his earthly future ; and if any observation in reference to it was made by myself or others, he either eluded it by some slight vague answer, or let it pass unnoticed, but by the shade of deeper seriousness which at such times fell on his thoughtful brow, and by a faint and sickly smile I now and then detected on his pale lips—perceptible perhaps to myself only ; but how keen is the eye of anxious tenderness ! Neither did he voluntarily take part in any general conversational topics or discussion of passing events, whether of local or national interest. He seemed like one who, having no part to play on life's busy stage, desired as much as possible to shut out even its distant murmurs, and to take no cognisance of 'chance or change,' beyond the circle of his own home and the world of his own heart. Within that small circle he had become more and more endeared to every living being during the season of his protracted feebleness and dependence ; so beautiful and touching was his heavenly sweetness of temper, his unalterable patience and his affectionate gratitude for every little attention or required service rendered to him by myself, his kind old tutor, or the faithful servants who had lived with me before his birth, and had taken their part in the care of himself and his little sister, when the infant orphans were brought from the house of mourning and death to the shelter

of my roof, in prattling unconsciousness of their irreparable loss.

“For each and every one of those humble friends Herbert had ever a kind word or smile, a grateful expression, or some familiar question when they approached him, even with that officiousness of over-anxiety so trying to irritable invalids ; and for my sake, he would at all times throw aside his book, or rouse himself from his deepest abstractions—but it was evident he made the effort for my sake only, and that the solitary musings to which he had been ever addicted were become the cherished and abiding habit of his mind.

“Often have I sat for hours, ostensibly occupied with my book or needlework, but in reality watching the varying expression of his countenance, as he lay back in his large reading-chair in the library window—an open volume in his hands, but his eyes seldom directed to its pages, or apparently fixed on any external object, except that, when they sometimes wandered to the scene without, a moist film would gather over the dark blue orbs, and, after closing them for a few moments, their long black lashes would be fringed with tears—ah ! with what feelings have I watched that eloquent silence—how fearfully have I conjectured the thoughts with which he had been contemplating the scene of his earliest pleasures. Had they been occupied solely with associations of the past ? the memory of his sweet sister and her foreign grave ? or mingled with such feelings as cause the eye to linger fondly

on objects it shall not long behold? I shrank from my *own thoughts*; and, after all, I believed, I hoped, he was doing well, and no dreaded, well-known symptom had yet warned me of his real danger. But this poor hope, this almost wilful delusion, was soon to be withdrawn, and for ever. As yet, I had not acquired courage closely to question Herbert's skilful and attentive medical adviser. But his visits, I observed, were longer and more frequent; and methought there was a shade of deeper seriousness upon his countenance after those lengthened conferences. 'I *will* speak to him—I will question him to-morrow' was, day after day, my self-engagement; 'but, after all, there can be no serious alteration for the worse. He does not lose strength—he has no cough,' was the miserable sophistry with which, from day to day, I still protracted my inquiry.

"Since our return home from Cambridge, Herbert had received two letters from his friend Mr. Melcomb. He had read, and re-read them, with evidently deep interest; for during the perusal the faint colour of his cheek would come and go, and he would sigh and shake his head, murmuring to himself inaudible words. I observed this emotion with no little anxiety, but was scarcely more relieved than surprised when it became evident that he was in no haste at least to answer these agitating communications. At last, on my return from a round of country visits, I found him one morning in the act of sealing letters, one of which was directed to his friend.

“He seemed exhausted, as if by an unusual effort, and said faintly as he pushed the letters from him—‘Thank God, it is written! My poor Melcomb!’—There had always been a sort of restraint between us on the subject of this friendship, and Herbert had never, since his return, named Melcomb to me; but now, raising his eyes to mine, after that short soliloquy, he said, as if inviting my attention—‘You could not but like Melcomb, my dear aunt, even for the little you saw of him at Cambridge. You must have loved him, had you known him as I do.’ I freely acknowledged the favourable impression made on me by his friend’s engaging manners and evident powers of mind, at the same time cautiously advertng to those characteristic peculiarities of style and expression which, even in the short time we were together, afforded me sufficient corroboration of the reports which had represented him to be a dangerous intimate for one so inexperienced—so enthusiastic and warm-hearted as my dear Herbert.

“He sighed, and for a moment seemed lost in thought. Then again, looking up at me, he rejoined, ‘Perhaps you was right, my dear aunt—my more than mother! You have known your poor Herbert long and well—the idle dreamer—the fond visionary! And yet before I went to Cambridge, and for some time afterwards, I believe I was for a time in the safe and straight path. My poor Melcomb! he loved me sincerely, and yet I was so much his inferior in every thing. His views were so beautiful—so holy—so

single—so self-sacrificing! all I had previously entertained appeared to me so poor, and cold, and selfish on comparison—and yet, on some points, his were awful tenets! I could neither entirely embrace, nor satisfy myself they were altogether erroneous. The struggle was too hard for this poor head and this weak frame of mine, and both gave way.—But, thank God,’ he continued, after a pause of deep emotion, ‘all is well with me now—all is peace! In that first portion of my tedious convalescence, during which the mental powers as well as the physical were, to all appearance, reduced to a state of perfect inanition, while I lay in seeming unconsciousness of all external things, my mind was dealing with itself, or rather the spirit of truth and love was at work within me, rebuking, chastening, composing, healing, and I awoke from that blessed trance with a determination to shun for the future all unprofitable inquiries into mysteries too deep and high for human comprehension—to lay aside (at least for a long season) all works of controversial divinity, and to turn in all my doubts and difficulties to this book only—this blessed Book!’ and, with an upward glance of adoring gratitude, he let fall his out-spread hand on the Bible which lay beside his writing-desk.

“There was that in the solemn fervour of his looks and language which awed and calmed, while it affected me profoundly, and I could only lean forward in silence, and press my lips to the thin pale hand that rested on the sacred volume; but my dear Herbert saw, as I

lifted up my face, that it was wet with tears. Then it was that, drawing his chair close to mine and taking my hand in both his, he began his task of tender preparation. For what! Oh, Heavens! the agony of that moment! What words, however cautious, could communicate, without piercing my very heart, the knowledge that his days were numbered—that for many weeks the dreaded disease had declared itself by such symptoms as, being made known to our anxious medical friend, had caused that ominous shade of increased seriousness in his kind face, which I had read so fearfully, but shrank from interpreting.

“‘It is even so, my aunt,’ said the beloved one, when I regained sufficient self-command to control the outward token of anguish. ‘It is even so; and already, as you may have observed, I have bid farewell to the world: and now, but for the pain of leaving you, I *could* rejoice that my hour is nigh. And yet—dreamer that I am!—I *had* looked forward to many sweet and pleasant passages in this life! To many days of faithful ministration and varied usefulness in my appointed station. To some dear future home among those I was leading heavenward, shared perhaps by . . . but *his* will be done. *Earthly* love might have more than divided this weak heart with him, whose right is all: Or again, the infirm mind might have wandered into dangerous paths, and the excitable spirit have been deluded by “vain imaginings.” It is in mercy that I am called thus early to rejoin my sweet sister.’ And his voice faltered as he uttered

the last words, and sank into a low inward articulation, as if replying to his own thoughts, when he continued, after a moment's pause—‘And what matters it that our dust may not mingle in the same grave, when the spirit shall be reunited in eternity?’

“He had let fall my hand while uttering the last sentence, and sank back in his chair with closed eyes—as if for the moment abstracted from all consciousness of my presence and of the painful task he had undertaken. But recalled to a sense of my distress by the sound of a half suppressed sob, he started from his reclining posture, and with a tender and almost a cheerful smile, again took my hand, and affectionately kissing it, said—‘But, beloved aunt! though I thought it best to acquaint you myself with what you could not have remained in ignorance of much longer, I have *not* told you that the time of our separation is *immediately* at hand: Many, many months—nay longer still—you may have to watch over the charge you will never feel to be a burden. Let us pass together my remaining portion of time like friends who are preparing to part but for a season; the one for another hemisphere to make ready for the joyful coming of her who was left behind. *You will* take comfort and support yourself for my sake, and God will support us both.’

“I felt that he was right—that for his sake I must not yield myself up to selfish sorrow: there would be much to do and to suffer, and I must brace myself for the appointed trial. I sought the solitude of my chamber and was, ‘*still*’ but not *alone*:—and when my dear

Herbert and I met again in the drawing-room before dinner, I was able to meet his look of kind solicitude with one which assured him of my regained composure.

“My next day’s conference with Kendrick (our medical friend) too fully confirmed Herbert’s communication. But on my pressing him on the subject—alas! the heart-sickening forlorn hope—of change of air—of climate—he gave his ready acquiescence to our removal for the approaching winter to some warm sheltered station on our own sea coast—Herbert having premised his unconquerable repugnance to leave England.

“I fear that if the dear being had been left to the guidance of his own wishes, he would thankfully have chosen to remain at Merivale—to dwell with his last looks on familiar objects and endeared scenes, and enjoying that sacredness of repose, inviolate only in the sanctuary of Home. But not for a moment did he contest the point on which he saw my trembling anxiety. He faintly smiled indeed when I ventured to hint at hopes beyond the mere procrastination of the dreaded event; but *that* he admitted might (God willing) be effected by the proposed plan, and he gave his cheerful assent for our immediate departure, the autumn being already far advanced, for Torquay, which was the place fixed on for our winter sojourn.

“My old butler, Johnson, preceded us, to engage a habitation; and make suitable arrangements for the particular accommodation and comfort of my dear invalid,

and we had every reason, on our arrival, to be satisfied with the result of his mission.

“He had taken for us one of two houses, built under the shelter of a wall of living rock, which by its gentle curvature completely protected them from the north and east, and partly from even the western breezes, while its whole front lay open to the sunny south; the silver sands, to which a grass slope descended from the broad terrace-walk which ran along the veranda, and the deep blue sea, glancing with innumerable sails.

“We reached our marine villa towards the close of a beautiful September afternoon; and Herbert, who had borne the journey wonderfully well, looked round him, as we took possession, with such sweet contentment in his face, as communicated to my heart a sense of gladness that would have been *almost* hope, if I had dared to encourage the fond whisperer.

“Very soon my dear invalid was seated at one of the French windows, which opened into the broad veranda throughout the length of two adjoining rooms.

“The late autumn noon was still and warm as a bright summer evening; and the measured plash of the long ridgy waves, as they stole softly over the glittering sands, and sluggishly retired, came pleasantly upon the traveller’s ear, still ringing with the sound of grinding wheels and clattering hoofs.

“The house taken for us was only let occasionally by the gentleman whose property it was, and the veranda was tastefully decorated with fine vases and

beautiful exotics. Close to the open window, at which Herbert had seated himself, stood a noble orange tree, gorgeous with golden fruit and snowy blossoms. Of these, a few petals were wafted towards him by a wandering breeze, and as their odour stole over his senses, I saw his countenance change, and his eyes fill with tears. I drew near, and kissed his forehead in silence, but our eyes met, and we needed not to tell each other to what far distant land our thoughts had wandered.

“Looking earnestly for a moment on a small gold hoop which encircled the little finger of his left hand, he pressed his lips to it, and said, ‘I took this ring from her dead finger—our mother’s wedding ring—let it not be withdrawn from mine, for I am the last of my race. Living, I would never have parted with it but for one purpose - - - - - Do you know, my dear aunt,’ he continued, with a quick inflection of voice, as he looked up half-smiling in my face, ‘I had the strangest dream about this ring the night before we left Merivale. One of my “poetic visions” you would call it, and truth to tell, I had been recreating that evening with my favourite Thalaba. Well, you shall hear as how in this my dream I found myself (how brought thither I know not) in the chancel of a strange church, all hung with black, and so dimly lighted, that nothing was distinctly visible but the altar, on which flamed two of those immense wax tapers which are used in the pageant of a corpse lying in state. The table was spread as for a solemn ceremony, and before

it, fronting the rails, stood a tall figure, attired rather as a monk than as a Protestant clergyman, for he wore a loose black robe, with a hood or cowl, which was drawn over his head and face. But, open in his hands, was our book of Common Prayer, from which, in a voice so deep and hollow, that it sounded as if ascending from the vaults beneath, he was reading, what I knew by some mysterious perception not connected with the sense of hearing, to be the marriage ceremony, and though unconscious how all had come to pass, I felt neither surprise nor perplexity at the circumstances in which I found myself, kneeling on the altar steps beside a female figure, covered from head to foot with a thick white veil. I was sensible that the relation in which we thus knelt together was that of bridegroom and bride, but when I stretched forth my hand, by a sort of mechanical impulse, to take hers as the rite proceeded, I felt no horror at the contact, though the hand which met mine from beneath the folds of the thick veil was cold and clammy like that of a corpse, and the nails of the small taper fingers were purpled and shrunken. Well, dear aunt, *you* shudder, but I did not, nor shrank from my veiled bride. There were shadowy forms near us—behind and on either side—but I knew not by whom that chilly hand was placed in mine, nor do I remember hearing distinctly the solemn question, nor articulating the affirmative, “I will.” But somehow the assent was asked and given on either part, and when the time came for placing the ring on the bride’s finger, I transferred to it *this very* ring

drawn from my own—my mother's wedding-ring—no sooner was the pledge given, than a bell tolled, (a funeral bell,) the tapers flared up to the vaulted roof, and the officiating priest stood before us disrobed of his sable vestments. It was Azrael, the Angel of Death.' ”

CHAPTER II.

“Youth, and the opening Rose,
May look like things too lovely for decay,
And smile at thee. But thou art not of those
Who wait the ripened bloom to *seize thy prey*.”
MRS. HEMANS.

“OUR house and the adjoining one—in fact, a continuation of ours, and standing in the same enclosure—had been so constructed by the gentleman whose property they were, for the accommodation of his own family and that of a married daughter. A slight partition of trellis-work, covered with ivy and ever-blowing roses, divided the grass-slope in front of the houses ; but a door of communication, opening from the end of our verandah into the next, had been made no doubt to facilitate the intercourse of the kindred households.

“Some straggling tendrils of ivy had already crept over the bolts and lock of the closed door, as if to interpose more effectually between the neighbours, now strangers to each other ; for the sound of steps and voices on the other side of the temporary barrier soon made us aware that we had neighbours, and the discovery (*so made*) was not particularly agreeable ; but we were not loud talkers, nor likely to take much

heed of that which concerned us not, so made a merit of necessity, and thought light of the annoyance.

“I was more disturbed, however, at hearing from my maid, while she assisted me in undressing, that one of our near neighbours was a young lady dying of consumption, attended by a most distressing cough, that symptom so mercifully lightened in my dear Herbert’s case. But we could not fail to hear this poor thing from our verandah ; and even in the house the partition wall might not be substantial enough to exclude sound. ‘And it will be a perpetual knell,’ was my sad soliloquy,—‘full of my Herbert’s doom. But it will strike on *my heart* only—to him death comes not clothed in terrors.’

“My apprehensions were verified in the course of the next morning—a warm and lovely one, which enabled Herbert to stroll down often to the sands, and have his chair placed in the verandah. Our neighbours were apparently enjoying the bright balmy day in the same manner with ourselves, for we heard voices on their side the partition, and soon, too soon, the sound of that peculiar cough attracted Herbert’s notice. He looked at me with a face of sad meaning, and said, ‘My servant told me this morning that we had three ladies for our neighbours—a mother and her two daughters—and that of the latter, one was an invalid. Poor thing! that sound tells the nature of her malady. How favoured have I been hitherto, dear aunt! so little of that distressing symptom attached to my complaint, and my sweet sister had to endure so much!’

“Except the frequent recurrence of that painful sound, we heard little more than low murmurs on the other side ; and should scarce have heeded the quiet undertone, but that now and then a young clear voice was heard above it, breaking out, in the innocent glee of childhood, into a merry laugh, or snatches of song, or quick exclamation.

“‘That sound cheers one’s heart, like the song of the sky-lark,’ was Herbert’s observation, after one of those outbursts of exuberant gladness ; for he delighted in children, and, when in health, had ever been a favourite playfellow among them ; but he started and changed colour when *another* voice—sweet, low, one of very peculiar intonation—was heard addressing some words to the younger speaker, close to the door of communication.

“‘What a remarkable similarity,’ he said, as we turned to retrace our sauntering steps towards the farther end of our sheltered terrace ;—‘I never heard but one voice like that, and it was poor Melcomb’s ;’ and, as was ever the case when any reference occurred to his college friend, a shade gathered over his brow, and he fell into a mood of sad abstraction.

“‘You have not heard from Mr. Melcomb in answer to your last letter, have you, dear Herbert?’ I inquired, less from a motive of curiosity, than with a view of drawing him from his melancholy reverie.

“‘No ; and it surprises and pains me that I have not. This was about the time he purposed taking his departure from England, probably for ever ; but surely

he would not, could not leave it without a farewell line to me, grievously as I fear he is disappointed in me.'

"How distressing to Mr. Melcomb's family and connexions,' I ventured to remark, 'must have been the change of his religious views, and of his plans and prospects in consequence of that change.'

"Yes. I believe his mother, his only surviving parent, was much disturbed by his determination ; and his uncle, from whom he had large expectations, besides the church preferment intended for him, has, I fear, gone the length of renouncing him. "All have cast me off," I have heard him say, yielding for a moment to natural weakness, "all but my sweet sister, my poor Agnes ; and she is scarcely a creature of this earth, and will not long sojourn here." You will laugh, my dear aunt, but I could fancy that voice was the voice of Melcomb's sister, if, unfortunately for the construction of the romance I might build upon that conjecture, we had not heard that our neighbours are named Harlowe. No conjuring Harlowe into Melcomb ; so my ingenious structure that might be, has not an inch of ground to stand on, and in sober sadness I do not wish it otherwise. I could not desire to identify Melcomb's beloved sister with that poor girl, whose hollow cough is a sound of such ill omen.'

"Secretly I blessed God that the dire portent had but slightly manifested itself in the case of the dear speaker ; and, with a trembling thankfulness I dared not call hope, I thanked *Him* for the degree of renova-

tion evident in Herbert's general apperance since our departure from Merivale.

“He passed great part of that day in the open air, making frequent sauntering excursions down the easy slope which led from our house to the margin of the glittering sands, and watching with interest and enjoyment the many glancing sails of small skiffs and fishing boats; and the slow and regular flux and reflux of the long and gently heaving waves; stooping now to pick up a shell or pebble, brilliant with its still wet varnish from the retiring tide, or a sea-weed of peculiarly vivid hue or elegant form. Our youngest neighbour, a little girl, seemingly about eight years old, had also found her way down to those sunny sands, so tempting and delightful to contemplative as well as infant minds, with their rich and ever-shifting store of marine treasures. And very soon I observed the collectors gradually drawing together, and in short time that a friendly intercourse was fairly established between them. It was not without inquietude that I looked at this commencement of acquaintance (as it was likely to prove) between our two families, for I shrank from the idea of bringing together the young persons so sadly and similarly circumstanced. But these thoughts were of course confined to my own bosom, and when my dear invalid came back to me with his smiling report of the familiar footing on which he already stood with the ‘pretty little mermaid,’ as he called his new acquaintance, I forgot every thing but gladness at his apparent pleasure.

“ ‘But only think, my dear aunt,’ he continued, ‘when my little friend left me just now with the basket I had helped to fill with weeds and shells, she told me they were all for sister Agnes, who was not yet well enough to come down and collect for herself—only for this name of Harlowe!’ ”

“While he was yet speaking, the door opened, and Johnson entered with a letter addressed to Herbert, sent in with Mrs. Harlowe’s compliments, and a civil note from that lady to myself, announcing her intention of calling on me the day following, should the state of Mr. Ross’s health be such as not to preclude me from receiving visitors. The letter addressed to my nephew, she had just received, enclosed in one from her son-in-law, Mr. Melcomb.

“While I was reading Mrs. Harlowe’s note, and penning my reply, my poor Herbert had broken the seal of his friend’s letter with a trembling hand, and was perusing its contents with a degree of agitation too evident in the varying colour of his cheek. As he read on, still fixed to the spot where he had received and torn open that deeply interesting letter, tears began to trickle slowly from beneath his long eyelashes; and, as if conscious of his visible emotion, he threw himself back on a sofa at the darker end of the room, shading his face with one hand, while the other shaking as if in an ague fit, held the open letter, on which his attention was still riveted. I respected his feelings too much to break in on them by question or remark, and having sealed and sent away my note,

I quietly withdrew to a seat just without the window, from whence, however, I could keep him still in sight, should the consequences of his nervous excitement call for active assistance. But after a time, having read and reread; and mused over that too interesting communication, he let it fall, still open in the hand that held it, on his knee, and leaning back his head on the sofa cushions, I saw that his dear face had resumed its expression of serene tranquillity, though the bright flush of agitation was succeeded by unusual paleness, with which his closed eyelids and marble brow, and seemingly unbreathing stillness, combined into a semblance so startling, that, after a moment's hesitation, I could no longer forbear gently drawing near, to assure myself that the beautiful clay still retained its spiritual inhabitant. Slight as was the sound of my approach, it roused him from that awful trance, and lifting up his head, he looked at me with a sad faint smile, and said, holding towards me the still unfolded letter, 'Take this, my dear aunt! my ever kindest, most indulgent friend! I have no reserves from you; and when you have read what my poor Melcomb writes, you will love him almost as I do, and perfectly comprehend the influence such a mind as his could not fail to acquire over mine. But defer reading it till you are alone. I shall best recover myself in the stillness of my chamber; and, by the help of a few minutes' stroll on the sands before dinner, shall be quite myself again by that time.'

"So saying, he withdrew to his own room, and

left me to the uninterrupted perusal of a letter, which, before it was half finished, had bathed my face with tears, and wellnigh fulfilled my nephew's prediction. I felt, and acknowledged to myself, that between two persons, whose characters assimilated so remarkably in many essential points as those of Melcomb and Herbert, it would have been extraordinary and unnatural, if acquaintance had not quickly ripened into intimacy, and intimacy into strong attachment.

“In each, the same ardent, enthusiastic temperament—the same deeply religious feeling—the same purity and singleness of heart—the same quick and fine perception of the good and beautiful.

“It would have been wonderful indeed if minds so constituted, and hearts so well in unison, had not been drawn together by the mysterious bands of sympathy, even from the first hour of meeting—and the few years by which Melcomb was senior to his friend would naturally secure to the former that influence and ascendancy which Herbert, in the extreme diffidence of his nature, ascribed to moral and intellectual superiority. ‘Yes, I must have loved this young enthusiast,’ was my silent acknowledgment while reading his affecting letter; and my heart smote me for having at one time imputed to him a portion of that pharisaical pride and pretension which characterise too many of those who ostentatiously assume to themselves the designation of ‘serious Christians.’ Here was no assumption of any sort, no pretension to superior sanctity, or to that depth of self-abasement

under which pride so often humbles itself that it may be exalted and receive praise of men. Melcomb's farewell to his friend was in the highest degree touching and solemn, written in the belief that (humanly speaking) they should meet no more in this world, for Herbert's letter from Merivale had apprised Melcomb of his more than precarious state. After dwelling on the affecting subject with all the tenderness of truest friendship, and all the hopefulness of Christian faith, Melcomb adverted with great feeling to the similar circumstances in which (he told Herbert) he had lately parted from his sweet sister, the daughter of his father by a second wife, married since his death to a gentleman of the name of Harlowe, and again widowed with another daughter by her last husband. 'It is a source of singular satisfaction to me, my dearest Herbert !' wrote his friend, 'that the will of Providence should so have ordered your ways, and those of my beloved sister, as to bring you so near together in this last stage of your earthly pilgrimage, that I do hope you may yet be acquainted with each other, and begin in time that intercourse which may be renewed and perfected in eternity. It has been a lurking wish of mine—a pleasant day-dream—that the two I love best on earth might thus be brought together—with the memory of the absent one—weaving our friendship as it were—a triple chord in one—and I am persuaded this will come to pass. My sister and my friend will meet on earth, before they meet in heaven, and speak together of the poor missionary, whose prayers for

them will ascend morning, and at noonday, and eventide—whether from the vast deserts of great waters, or of burning sands, or of the howling wilderness; from among the habitations of Christian men, or of those not yet visited by “the day spring from on high,” for whose sake he goes a voluntary exile from country, home, and kindred. But, oh Herbert! I have yet to impart to you a wish, a strong desire, which has strengthened in my heart from day to day, since I have known that my only sister and my dearest friend might possibly be brought together under circumstances so solemn, so affecting. Herbert will you, if life and power are so far extended to yourself, supply to my Agnes, in her hour of need, the ministry of her absent brother, whose awful sense of a paramount duty calling him hence, might have failed to sustain his purpose had he been aware, before the decisive step was taken, of this beloved one’s approaching change? But had it been possible—justifiably possible to have relinquished—or even postpone my departure, I should not have been permitted to take my faithful stand beside the couch of my dying sister. The mother of my Agnes (whose change of conduct towards me can never cancel the debt of gratitude I owe her for years of maternal care and kindness) has misjudged her husband’s son, and strongly deprecating his influence over her daughter’s mind, dreads it, more especially under present circumstances; for alas! in mistaken fondness for her darling child, she withholds from her, and almost conceals from herself,

the dangerous nature of her disease, and the nearness of that change which cannot be long protracted by the utmost efforts of human science. O, Herbert! I could fondly hope that you are appointed by Providence (her fellow-traveller through the dark valley) to prepare my Agnes for the awful passage: to prepare—to calm—to strengthen—to encourage—to comfort—not as the world comforts, speaking of peace when there is no peace—of hope when there is no hope—of life temporal to one on the verge of life eternal.

“You will find the good seed sown and cherished in that meek, loving heart: But the love of life (for she is young and happy) is yet strong within it, and deluded (as you *are not*) by the insidious nature of her malady, she sees not the beckoning hand, but dreams of distant days, and even earthly reunion with her absent brother, while he well knows that in this world he shall see her face no more.

“Oh Herbert! let her not pass away thus unconscious of her real state. False and fallacious are the pleas of erring fondness of *self-sparing* infirmity—that the youth and *innocence* of the unconscious victim are sufficient warrant for its safe passage into eternity—unwarned and thoughtless of impending doom. Wo be to those who lay this flattering unction to their hearts, and take upon themselves—by acting on it—the awful responsibility. Talk not to Agnes of her pure heart and sinless life, but tell her, that though all are guilty before God, the Son of God died for all, and that in Him, and through Him, for all who

come unto Him is sure salvation. And, Herbert! that *all are* free to come, is at length the firm and fixed conviction in which has terminated all those distressing doubts by which your friend's mind was for a long season agitated and perplexed, and for a time, indeed, during the period of our intimacy, swayed to an opposite conclusion. I thank God, my friend, that you were the first to struggle into light, from that maze of error in which I had nearly been the means of involving you, together with myself—and in all confidence, I commit to you the charge, to which I am forbidden to devote myself. Be to my Agnes what her brother would have been; her awakener—her guide—her comforter—and oh! far more, my Herbert! her companion through that last dark strait of time, which shall, by God's grace, conduct you both to a heaven of eternal blessedness.'

"There was much more in Melcomb's letter, addressed more particularly to Herbert—many affecting and tender passages; much of hope, and earnest exhortation, and of the outpouring of Christian friendship, looking beyond the grave for perfect consummation. But from the portion I have read to you, Mr. Lindsay, you will readily believe that tears were streaming down my cheeks when I folded up the paper; and when I replaced it in Herbert's hands at our next meeting, the look with which I met his inquiring glance belied my heart, if it expressed aught but the warmest sympathy in his feelings towards the writer of that most interesting letter.

“The next morning brought with it Mrs. Harlowe’s expected visit. She came, accompanied by her little daughter Flora, the smiling recognition between whom and her seaside acquaintance broke through the formality of our first meeting, and we were soon engaged in easy conversation, which took a tone of deeper interest when Herbert, having been drawn away towards the lawn by his new friend, Mrs. Harlowe availed herself of the opportunity to inquire respecting his health, and to confide to me (of whose sympathy she was well assured) her hopes and fears—of which it was evident the former greatly preponderated—concerning her daughter. I listened with tender pity to the poor mother’s self-deluding speech; fresh in my ear as was the sound of that hollow cough—the knell, as it seemed to me, of the young Agnes. But as my sanguine guest continued to talk away her own apprehensions, and from that subject adverting to my cause of anxiety, professed surprise at perceiving in Herbert’s general appearance but slight indications of disease, and a cheerful assurance that his malady as well as her daughter’s would yield to skilful treatment and youth’s tenacious powers, I felt that her hopefulness was contagious, and spite of reason’s sad suggestions, I blest her in my heart for the momentary gladness reflected from her sanguine temper on my darker spirit. Drawn together as we were by mutual sympathy, it is not wonderful that when Mrs. Harlowe rose to take leave, we parted with a degree of cordiality seldom felt or expressed at such an early

stage of acquaintance by we phlegmatic English, whose social feelings are for the most part of such tedious growth, that one would think life in our days was still extended to antediluvian length, admitting ample time for the cautious reserve which restrains us from all friendly advances towards a fellow-creature, till we have ascertained his style, title, and circumstances in this world of ours—for we do not so strictly insist on character.

“It was arranged before we separated, that the door of communication between our two verandahs should be unfastened, for the facilitation of our future intercourse, and more especially for the convenience of our dear invalids, who might thus pass from one house to the other with as little risk or fatigue as to their own chambers.

“The next morning Herbert came down from his room at an earlier hour than usual, with so firm a step, and so much appearance of renovation, that my heart beat quick as I looked at him, whispering to itself, ‘Can it be possible!’

“Contrary to his general bearing, he was restless and pre-occupied, and as early as we could ask admittance, reminded me of my promise to return Mrs. Harlowe’s visit. ‘And your *consistent* nephew, who has so long discontinued all intercourse with strangers and the world, will accompany you, my dear aunt!’ he added with an ingenuous smile, which faded into a more thoughtful expression as he said, after a short pause—‘I must become acquainted, you know, with

my new sister. Melcomb has committed to me a solemn trust—and I have prayed to be directed and strengthened in the fulfilment of it.’

“Herbert’s countenance as he spoke, was so irradiated by sanctity of purpose, that as he stood before me, ‘serene in youthful beauty,’ methought in very truth, ‘his face was as it were the face of an angel’—and my apprehension for himself—for the risk to his weak frame and nervous system he was about to incur, was now overawed and silenced by reverence for his motives, and a secret consciousness that opposition to them would be sinful as well as fruitless; so, with a silent prayer committing to God my beloved one and the issue of our visit, I prepared myself to accompany him.

“Little Flora ran forward, as we were ushered into Mrs. Harlowe’s saloon, to meet and welcome Herbert, and to lead him to be introduced to sister Agnes before her mother could perform that ceremony to us both with less indecorous haste. But the hackneyed line may be fitly applied to children, who often

Set before ’em

A grace, a manner, a decorum,

unattainable by art and artificial rules, and we were indebted to our youthful introductress for hurrying us through the first forms of a meeting, that, circumstanced as we were, would otherwise have been more trying to Herbert and myself. As it was—before the expiration of a few minutes we were seated together, like acquaintances of a much longer date, Herbert being

established by his friend Flora in a comfortable corner of her sister's couch. And soon, as she talked with my nephew, I was enabled to take more than a furtive glance at the young creature between whom and himself existed such a mournful similarity of circumstances. That alone would have ensured her a warm interest in my heart, but who could have beheld the sweet Agnes Melcomb, such as she was when I first looked upon her, with unmoved and uninterested feelings? Alas! the progress of disease was more apparent in her than in my beloved Herbert—for while his respiration was for the most part free and regular as that of healthful childhood, the painful oppression of hers was too evident in the short audible breathing, and in the quick heaving of the soft bosom folds of her long muslin wrapping gown. Her half reclining attitude, and the languid sinking of her slender form, allowed me to form no correct judgment of its height—though there was a general indication of the growth having been too rapid, and already exceeding middle stature. On the sunken temples, from which the hair, black as night, was parted back in two thick folds, and gathered into a knot at the back of the head; and over the long snowy throat and half transparent hands, the course of the blue veins was as distinctly visible, as if traced externally by the artist's pencil. Her large dark eyes, half veiled by the heavy lids, were in fact grey, but of that peculiar tinge—that *ebon blue* of the storm-cloud—which might have been taken for black, (but for their dove-like softness,) deepened as was their colour

by the long jetty eye-lashes, whose shadow rested on the marble paleness of cheeks that had lost their youthful roundness, on one of which—as if just uplifted from the pillow—glowed one bright spot of that rich rose tint, so far more appalling to an experienced observer, than the most deadly pallor.

“Beyond the surpassing beauty of those eyes, ‘that seemed to love whate’er they looked upon,’ and the almost infantine sweetness of expression about a mouth that reminded me of that very peculiar feature in her brother’s face—that of Agnes Melcomb had no distinguished claim to beauty. Such as she was, however, such as I that day beheld her, in her half reclining posture—like a tall young lily bent before the blast—a being hovering (as was too evident) on the confines of both worlds, she appeared to me the most angelic creature my eyes had ever rested on since they watched the fading beauty of my own Ann Ross, that orphan girl whose early fate drew from your eyes, my dear friend, many a tear of tenderest compassion and sympathy for our sorrows, when we met for the first time at Castle-a-Mare.

“At the time of her death, our lost Ann had just completed her sixteenth year. The youthful victim I now looked upon was not yet nineteen! Alas! alas! and had the fatal decree gone forth against her? Was the sentence irreversible? Was she also, and that beloved one who sat beside her, both those youthful, beautiful beings, to be taken from light and life, fair hopes, and fondest affection, the cheerful sunshine, and

the smiling earth, and laid so early in the dark narrow house appointed for all living? Oh, Lindsay! there are moments when such thoughts as these *will* suggest themselves to the most faithful, the most believing, and resigned; but thanks be to the revealed word, though mists and shadows may for a time come between us and our immortal hopes, they cannot utterly obscure them, and when the temporary film is withdrawn, we penetrate farther, and with a clearer vision, into realms of light and blessedness; tracking *thither* the ascent of the emancipated spirit, instead of clinging to its cast-off slough; the perishable mortal part that must be hidden awhile from our eyes, before it shall be raised imperishable and glorified.

“Beside the couch of Agnes stood a sofa-table, on which were spread out on plates and papers many coloured sea-weeds, in various stages of preparation; a source of mutual interest and occupation to the sick girl and her lively little sister, whose lately collected shells and pebbles were also arranged in rows on the same table, and Herbert was soon busied with the sisters in the light labour of disentangling and spreading the beautiful weeds, designed, when properly prepared, to enrich a collection of natural specimens, marine and other, of which a large book produced by Agnes was half full, she boasted, and in which, by the end of the next summer, not a blank leaf should be left, if she soon got well and strong and could assist Flora in collecting.

“As she spoke, a faint flush mantled on Herbert’s

cheek, and he stooped with more seeming intentness over his delicate task ; but a moment after, when his eyes glanced aside at the fair pale face, bent in smiling eagerness beside his, I saw that they were glazed with tears, and that by a strong effort only he so mastered his emotion as to answer some question she addressed to him with an unfaltering voice.

“As Mrs. Harlowe strolled with me on the lawn, leaving the young trio to their quiet occupation, she fell by degrees into almost confidential discourse relating to her family affairs ; and adverting to her absent son-in-law, spoke of him with a degree of asperity I should scarce have looked for from a person of her apparent gentleness and kindly nature.

“But recollecting my former experience with regard to Melcomb, and the too just cause I had had for deprecating his influence over Herbert, I made large allowance for Mrs. Harlowe’s feelings, especially on perceiving that the irritation she betrayed was occasioned by a recent endeavour of her step-son’s to awaken her to a conviction of her child’s danger, and a solemn exhortation he had addressed to her, in his farewell letter, to prepare the unconscious Agnes for a knowledge of the awful truth—since to himself, he added ‘a mother’s mistaken tenderness had denied the consolation of performing that solemn duty before he parted with his beloved sister for the last time on this side eternity.’

“The poor mother, as she repeated these words to me, gave way to a burst of angry reproachfulness, the

evidence rather of secret fear and inward misgivings, than of harsh feeling towards her son-in-law, whose 'cruel unnecessary counsel,' she vehemently condemned, applauding the firmness with which she had resisted his pleadings to be allowed to see his sister in private before their separation. 'He would have killed my child,' faltered the poor woman, with a rising sob. 'My timid Agnes would have expired under the shock. And now she is so much better, so fast recovering, how barbarous it would be to cause her such useless agitation!'

"How often does some poor weak heart seek relief thus waywardly, by denying to itself the existence of impending evil, and venting its real terrors in angry accusation of the faithful and courageous monitor who dares, at whatever cost to his own feelings, to utter the warning voice! *My* heart ached for the poor mother as she looked up in my face for encouragement to her fond delusion, but I could only keep silence; and after a moment's pause, adverting to the state of my own dear sufferer, I ventured a grateful remark on the extraordinary measure of divine grace which supported him under the calm and settled conviction that a fatal termination of his malady was not far distant, adding, how fervently I prayed for strength sufficient to uphold *me* through that hour when I should be called on to resign the last living object of my earthly care.

"My observation was met with more of impatience than sympathy, and with a vehemence of sanguine

prognostic more indicative of secret misgiving than of cheerful assurance ; but I also was prone to catch at shadows, tinted with the faintest colouring of hope, and by degrees our conversation assumed a less sombre tone, and we parted mutually pleased with our prospect of frequent intercourse.

“Circumstanced as we were, indeed, our acquaintance had made farther advance towards intimacy in three days than it would have done in as many months, had we been brought together in general society, and amid the turmoil of worldly distractions. Hearts do not open, like gaudy flowers, in broad sunshine, but rather in stillness and in shade, like those more delicate and fragrant, that wait the coming forth of the evening star to diffuse their hoarded sweetness.

“In a short time our two families became almost as one—Mrs. Harlowe’s drawing-room the general rendezvous, and Herbert’s post, established for the most part, as assigned by Flora, in one corner of the sofa occupied by Agnes, or in a comfortable chair at the sisters’ work-table. For a season, as is so common in consumptive cases, there was a seeming pause in the progress of disease in both the dear objects of our solicitude, and in Herbert I remarked especially such a lighting up of the languid and drooping spirit, as half beguiled me into hope that the physical renovation was equally unquestionable.

“The strength of Agnes was so far restored, that she was soon able, with the assistance of an arm, to reach the sea-beach once at least in every morning of

those soft sunny days that succeeded each other in unvarying series through many weeks of that delightful autumn. There, settled luxuriously on a heap of cloaks and shawls, arranged by her tender little nurse, whose care for the accommodation of Herbert was almost as zealous, she passed many an hour of peaceful enjoyment, my nephew sometimes seated beside her, or strolling to a short distance with Mrs. Harlowe and myself, or enlisted by Flora in her persevering quest of marine treasures, to be deposited at the feet or in the lap of Agnes on their return from each short excursion.

“Herbert had become decidedly a favourite with Mrs. Harlowe, and in her sanguine persuasion that his perfect recovery and that of her daughter were no longer doubtful, she watched the progress of their intimacy, and the similarity of their tastes and pursuits, with evident and avowed gratification; in the affectionate openness of her nature sometimes expressing to me her almost romantic desire that their already undisguised regard might ripen into permanent attachment. But well I knew that no fond dreams of earthly union with the sweet Agnes mingled with the tender interest felt for her by Herbert; for he at least deluded himself with no fallacious hopes, built up on temporary revival, and I was full sure that throughout our pleasant hours of daily intercourse, one anxious thought was ever present with him, and that he felt himself ‘straitened,’ till the accomplishment of the task committed to him by his departing friend.

“But his opportunities of uninterrupted conversation with Agnes were few and short, little Flora being their almost inseparable companion during the occasional absence of her mother ; so that I believe it was long before Herbert ventured to speak unreservedly to Agnes of her absent brother, and to introduce by cautious degrees the subject nearest to his heart. But soon as the autumnal air freshened into more bracing keenness, the sick girl shrank like a tender flower from its ruder visitation, and again, visibly and sensibly drooping, seldom quitted the corner of her soft sofa, and the regulated temperature of the drawing-room ; and Herbert’s enjoyment of out-door exercise being restricted by the same cause almost to the short range of the sunny verandah, it now frequently happened that the two invalids were left together for a considerable time, while Flora accompanied her mother and myself in our still daily walks.

“Had these young persons been less sadly circumstanced, I, as well as the mother of Agnes, should have noted with delighted, as well as deep interest, the progress of an attachment, which, situated as they were, I felt it would be profanation to call love ; and that, on the part of Herbert at least, ‘love such as angels feel,’ was the only sentiment he would dare entertain towards her, whose young innocent heart had perhaps given itself to him, unconscious that its affections must be so soon unwound from every earthly object. But whatever were the reciprocal feelings of those young hearts, and whatever the nature of an affection so

strangely born, and nourished, as it were, in the very shadow of death, it was affection the most touching to behold, from its peculiar character of ever watchful sympathy, observant each of the other's sufferings, and for each other's sake ingenious in every tender art that can beguile and soothe the sufferer—an anxiety as artlessly displayed by the sweet Agnes, as evinced in every look and gesture of Herbert.

“Insensible as she still seemed to the fact of her own danger, she became gradually in some measure awakened to the serious nature of Herbert's malady, and often, as she scanned his wasting form, and hollow cheek, a cloud of sadness gathered over that fair wan face, whose playful sweetness of expression had hitherto scarcely varied in her hours of severest suffering. Of this awakening sense of his precarious state, Herbert availed himself to prepare her for a knowledge of her own, during one of those morning opportunities that were now frequently afforded.

“Adverting to the subject of his own health, he went on to speak of the graciousness of God's dealings with him, in giving him perfect and salutary knowledge of the hopelessness of recovery, and ample time of preparation for the approaching change. I believe (for Herbert dwelt not on details in this part of his agitated account) that the poor Agnes was cruelly overpowered, on being made perfectly to comprehend the whole of the fatal truth, as far as the fate of Herbert was involved in it. It is possible—though I do but surmise it so far—that her young heart, in its first

outbreak of uncontrollable anguish, betrayed the fulness of its feelings towards him.—And his!—in that trying moment, did it utter no secret cry, no passionate appeal, that if it were possible, ‘the cup might yet pass from them?’ If human infirmity so far prevailed, assuredly the words, ‘Thy will be done,’ went up to Heaven in the same breath; and the answer was, ‘peace and strength;’ for, bracing himself up for the full performance of his accepted trust, before they separated that morning, the gentle and fearful creature, whose tender nature had been so distressfully overpowered by the intimation of *his* danger, was calmed as well as awe-struck by the more cautiously conveyed knowledge of her own.

“The precise manner of the communication, and its immediate impression, I know not. I could not, dared not, curiously inquire, so sacred to my feelings were the secrets of that sad, strange interview—secrets such as ‘angels might love to look upon’—but too holy to be subjected to the profanation of mortal curiosity. That day Herbert paid no second visit to Mrs. Harlowe’s drawing-room, and I found him indeed so exhausted by recent excitement, that it was with some difficulty he supported himself to join me at the dinner hour, and soon afterwards bidding me farewell for the night, he requested that Johnson might be summoned to assist him to his bed-chamber. ‘But feel no unusual anxiety on my account, dearest aunt,’ he whispered with his parting kiss, observant of my anxious and troubled countenance—‘this exhaustion is but tem-

porary—you will see me to-morrow, (if I am spared so long,) revived and gladdened by the consciousness that the painful part of my delegated office is fulfilled. The awakening is over ; and I have now only to soothe—to support—to encourage, my sister pilgrim through the short remainder of our way.’

“‘As if an angel spoke,’ I listened in tearful, reverential silence to the words of the beloved speaker, watching his enfeebled steps, as, leaning heavily on Johnson’s arm, he slowly retired, with a sad foreboding that the time was fast approaching when I should hear his voice no more.

“Scarcely had Herbert left me, when Mrs. Harlowe tapped at the window for admittance, having left Flora, she said, beside the couch of her sleeping sister. The hopeful spirit of my poor friend was still unsubdued, though for some time past she had become more restlessly watchful of her precious charge, and could not at all times, it was evident, conceal from herself the too visible progress of disease. This evening she was unusually thoughtful and depressed ; spoke of the increasing debility of Agnes, and of a change she had lately observed in the hitherto gay and happy temper of her darling—‘and this evening she is quite unlike herself,’ continued the anxious mother, ‘I have surprised her more than once in tears, and when I endeavoured to draw from her the cause of her distress, she hid her dear face in my bosom, and sobbing as if her heart would break, asked my forgiveness for all her faults, and the great trouble and anxiety she had occa-

sioned me. Blessed child ! she who has been the joy and comfort of my life, till now that Oh, my dear friend ! is it even so, are those two beloved beings to be united only in death ?' I could only mingle my tears with those of my sister in affliction, who gave way to a burst of agony, soon exhausted by its own violence ; and then again the sanguine temper struggled for ascendancy, and before she rose to leave me, the fond self-deceiver had talked away half her own fears, and but for the almost reproving seriousness of my answering looks, would fain have beguiled me into forgetfulness of mine.

"But I could not suffer her to leave me unaccompanied. I wished to look once more that day on the sweet Agnes, now become to me an object of almost maternal interest ; and together we stole noiselessly into the drawing-room, at the farther end of which she lay still sleeping, little Flora watching beside her motionless as a statue.

"Stealthily I crept towards the couch, and for many moments stood sadly gazing on that young pale face, whose serenity would have been the very 'rapture of repose,' but for a moist and glittering token, which had stolen as she slept from beneath the long eyelash, to the small white hand on which her cheek rested on the pillow. The other hand lay languidly on her lap, in relaxed hold of a half open prayer-book. The thin fingers yet marked the page she had been reading ; it was the service appointed for the burial of the dead,

“If our neighbourly intercourse was from this day forth less enlivened by the unconscious gaiety of Agnes, and the feverish excitement of her mother, hitherto sustained by fond and baseless hope, the hearts of all were drawn closer together, as the veil of useless and cruel concealment was withdrawn.

“That of my poor friend still for a brief while maintained the miserable struggle between wilful disbelief and sober, irresistible conviction—between its own passionate wishes and the Almighty will. But gradually the secret working of his grace prevailed over the resisting infirmity of nature; submissive tears succeeded to impetuous anguish; and then came the sense of dependent weakness, and divine support,—the calmness born of acquiescence in the divine will, and the dawning of a better hope than that of which the sacrifice was so hardly yielded. It was as beautiful as affecting to mark the instrumentality by which this great change in the feelings of my poor friend was brought to pass,—even by the gentle ministry of the beloved one—the object of that fond idolatry, which had possibly drawn down upon itself the rod that chasteneth in mercy.

“The youthful victim—should I not rather say, the youthful saint? was now her mother’s comforter, her tender and timid nature receiving supplies of strength and consolation in full measure, as she imparted to her still weaker parent. The breaking heart of the little Flora, too, pierced by its first great sorrow, (that spear of sharpest point!) found balm only on the bosom of

sister Agnes, soothed by her tears and kisses, and softly whispered words of heavenly hope. And from whence did the fair saint herself derive the power, that thus, in the hour of her extremest need, triumphed over natural weakness, and the shrinking fearfulness of her own heart? Assuredly from that one only source of all efficient aid, whose strength is perfected in weakness; but the Divine will, so often working in its wisdom by human agency, had assigned to its trembling creature such mortal companionship and support, through the shadowy and mysterious passage, as divested it of half its terrors. The path Herbert must tread would hardly have been declined by Agnes, had she been free to enter on or turn aside from it; and when he spoke to her of the place it led to—of the nothingness of all sufferings by the way, compared with the exceeding great reward of those who are faithful to the end; of the reunion of friends long parted, never to part again; (and in that blissful vision the image of the absent Melcomb was present with the sister and the friend;) of tears wiped from all eyes; of hearts lightened of all sorrow, cleansed from all sin; and as his face, while he thus discoursed of heaven and heavenly things, lightened up with the glory of his subject, the eyes of Agnes followed the direction of his, upraised in holy fervour, and assuredly at such moments her fears were more than calmed—her hope almost exultant.

“But not at all seasons was the spiritual thus victorious over the material frame. In both our dear

charges the mental energies ebb and flowed with the fluctuations of bodily disease ; though under all circumstances each was most tremblingly alive to the other's sufferings. At intervals also, in the course of that long dreary winter, sickly gleams of hope stole in upon us—upon myself—and more especially on Mrs. Harlowe ; withdrawn almost as soon as the false light had played before us, but doubtless sent in mercy to beguile the heart-wasting uniformity of hopeless watching.

“ And with both our beloved ones the hand of death dealt slowly, and for the most part mildly with each ;—*mildly*, compared with its more frequent inflictions ; for they who have tended decaying nature, and watched the process of dissolution, know that rarely indeed does the great change take place so easily and painlessly as is often depicted in the fanciful page of fiction—the fond assumption of the inexperienced or unthinking. But they know also, that though their own hearts have responded pang for pang, to the breaking of every living chord, that it is good for them, as well as for the object of their agonized affection, that the instrument should be thus gradually unstrung, and that the lingering ordeal is appointed to prove the faith and submission of the mourner, as well as of the departing, whose rest is so near.

“ To my poor Herbert the most painful privation resulting from his increasing infirmities, was, that as the winter set in more severely, he was often for days together debarred from all personal intercourse with

Agnes, whose drooping spirits at such seasons, without evincing the slightest shade of fretfulness or impatience, betrayed the lingering weakness of the creature, still in some sort clinging for support to its fellow-mortal. Then it was, in those sad and trying intervals, that the loving little Flora flitted from house to house, from one sick chamber to the other, like a bright spirit on a sunbeam, conveying from each to each, warm from the heart, thoughts and feelings, messages and assurances, most fitly committed, in their saintly purity, to the innocent agency of that lovely intelligent child: and frequently she was the bearer of short notes and sundry tokens, valueless, yet invaluable, the hieroglyphic characters of the heart's language.

“Often throughout the course of her life to come, will that dear child look back, with grateful and tender remembrance, to the period of her youthful ministry between those who are now angels in heaven. Deep in her heart I trust have sunk the lessons of their beautiful example and affectionate teaching; for it was the delight of both (unselfish in all their feelings) to turn to the profit of the faithful and docile little messenger and friend every incident and circumstance connected with, and interesting to themselves, upon which some ‘word in season’ might be spoken conducive to her instruction and improvement.

“Often henceforward, as she turns over the leaves of her Bible—the Bible given to her by Herbert, with his name and hers written by himself on the fly leaf—will her eyes and heart linger long on particular

passages inseparably associated with the memory of those who so frequently, during seasons of particular trial, exhorted and comforted each other by applicable sentences from holy writ, indicated from each to each by the finger of Flora, or repeated from her faithful memory. Their voices will speak to her in the voice of nature ; from whose inexhaustible storehouse they taught her, by participation and example, to draw forth treasures of delight, unfading and uneloying in their simple purity. How precious to her will be the possession of that book of natural specimens, half filled by their joint labours. It had been the natural and impulsive act of Agnes, on becoming fully aware that she stood on the brink of eternity, to put away from her as nearly as possible, all the petty concerns of time—turning especially from the innocent occupations she had hitherto delighted in, with a heart-sickening sense of her changed circumstances. But Herbert, after a while observing this, drew forth from its hiding place the discarded book, and spreading it open on the table before Agnes, said to her, as he looked with undiminished interest on their collected treasures—‘ Dear friend ! because we are drawing near to our father’s home, shall we therefore refuse to pick the way-side flowers with which he has adorned the path that leads to it ? And from that hour, almost to the last of her short life, the work was resumed at intervals, and with a far deeper interest than that of former days, when, at Herbert’s suggestion, the heirship of the

book was assigned to Flora, the young associate of their unfinished task.

“Forgive me, Lindsay ! that I dwell on such details, so trivial, so unimportant as they would be deemed by many ; but the heart’s records are made up of such trifles, and the least among them is sanctified by love and sorrow. How vividly I have now before me—nay, you will have patience with me, my kind friend !—the forms of Herbert and Flora, as in a by-gone hour ! My dear one languidly extended on his couch, but listening with a sweet attentive seriousness to the words of the fair child who stood before him, her face all glowing with earnest inquiry, and holding forth in her small hand a chrysalis she had found among the cobwebs in a closet, which she had been bidden by ‘sister Agnes’ to show to Herbert, with a request that he would tell her of what that shape of torpid life was a type and semblance.

“As she delivered her mysterious message, Herbert’s pale face flushed over cheek and brow, and half raising himself in the strength of his emotion, he took the child’s hand, still holding the chrysalis between both his, and looking with affectionate seriousness into her soft glistening eyes, said,—‘ Know you not, my little Flora, that within this shapeless husk, is hidden what once had life and motion ? what still lives, though motionless,—senseless,—invisible ? what, when the time is come, shall break forth into more perfect life ; no longer, as before its shroud was wrapt about it, a vile creeping worm, but a beautiful winged creature,

destined to take its pastime in the fields of air and light, soaring far, far above the earth on which it was condemned to crawl out its first state of existence?"

"The child's kindling eye, still riveted on his, and the quick heaving of her chest, told that her sharp intellect had half solved the mystery; but she still silently awaited the promised explanation.

"‘My little Flora,’ resumed her gentle teacher, ‘as the worm is hidden for awhile in that dark shell, its coffin and its grave, shall not our bodies also’——

"‘Oh! I know, I know it all now,’ she broke in with passionate vehemence, while tears, that had been gathering in her soft eyes, coursed each other like heavy rain-drops over the crimson cheeks. ‘I know all now that sister Agnes meant, and she and you will soon fly away, far, far from poor Flora, till, till’—— and her eyes brightened with April sunshine as she continued, after a moment's thought, ‘till wings, like those of the beautiful butterfly, are given to her too to follow you into heaven.’

"Lindsay! reminiscences such as these *are* treasures to be garnered in one's heart of hearts. But I will linger over them no longer; and now, a little patience yet, and I shall reach the close of my uneventful story.

"So passed the dreary winter months, and with them ebbed away, fast, fast, those precious lives, that seemed sinking to the lowest mark, when

‘Spring's first breath
Came forth to whisper where the violets blow,’

and for a little space revived even those fading human flowers, whose place was so soon 'to know them no more.'

"Suddenly the cough ceased with Agnes, and, though her weakness perceptibly increased, she was otherwise so free from suffering, that when carried from her chamber to the drawing-room couch, she was again able, for many hours of the day, to enjoy the refreshing change, and above all, the companionship of him who was to her more than a brother; for Herbert, too, had so far rallied, as to resume his station beside her, near the littered sofa-table, where little Flora still plied her now unassisted tasks, or at times read aloud in her sweet, clear, childish voice, to those who were no longer capable of the exertion; and often as the day darkened, and the silvery moonlight stole in upon our party, each busied with thoughts that loved that quiet hour, the low converse of the younger trio would drop away insensibly to words whispered at intervals, or give place to the soft tones of the child's voice, as, seated on her little stool, her arm resting on her sister's lap, it swelled with tremulous sweetness into the simple melody of the evening hymn.

"But day by day the little remaining strength of Agnes decreased rapidly, and for the last two her removal to the sitting-room had been followed by long fainting fits; so that the repetition of so fatiguing an experiment was expressly forbidden by the physician who attended her and Herbert.

"'And my friend here,' he added, turning to the

latter, with whom he spoken apart for a few moments, 'must be content, also, to keep his chamber for a day or two. These young ones have been talking each other to death, I suspect, and must do penance for a while in separate cells. Nay, all the better,' he turned to say, while leaving the room, 'if the sentence is enforced immediately.'

"But who could have had the heart to enforce it? when the pleading looks of both, alternately bent on us and each other, even more touchingly than their beseeching words, prayed, that for the short remaining hour of this day,—possibly the last they should pass together,—they might not be separated.

"Thank God! they were not. With a prohibition of almost all conversation, and an injunction to Flora not to tempt them by word or sign to disobey, Mrs. Harlowe and I acceded to the petition, and leaving them to their silent companionship, withdrew with our work to the farther end of the drawing-room.

"Our own sad and spiritless converse soon languished into watchful silence, as we gratefully observed that the restless weariness, from which Agnes had been suffering for some hours, was giving way to drowsiness; and in a few minutes Herbert, whose easy-chair was close beside her pillow, bent over and gazed on her for a moment, and then, half turning towards us, motioned with his finger that she slept.

"Flora, absorbed in her silent occupation, continued it, till the fast-fading daylight was insufficient even for her young eyes, and then, softly rising, the child stole

on tip-toe to take one look at her sleeping sister, and seated herself quietly on the low stool, resting her fair head on Herbert's knee.

“Deep in mournful musing we sat in our distant corner, gazing on the beloved group, till the increasing gloom scarce allowed us to distinguish each from each. They were still as marble statues ; shudderingly my heart whispered, ‘still as death.’ But the regular breathing of the child was soon audible, as she, too, caught the infectious influence of the hour, and sank into quiet slumber ; and Herbert slightly stirred, methought with something of startled suddenness, as if about to rise, or as though Agnes was awakening ; but just then a mass of heavy clouds dropped down like a pall over that quarter of the heavens from whence the pale rays of the rising moon had begun to steal through the uncurtained windows, and in a moment all was wrapped in darkness. There was yet a little stir from the sofa—something of undefinable sound ; and then a deep, dead hush, so indescribably oppressive in its continuance, that I can only define my sensations by those awfully descriptive words, ‘An horror of great darkness fell upon me.’

“Those of my companion were little less oppressive, I believe, for putting forth her hand to feel for mine, she grasped it with tremulous force, and I could have fancied I heard the quick pulsation of her heart.

“What would we not have given to have called for lights, and so dissolved that strangely morbid spell ! But the relief was not to be thought of, at the risk of

arousing the dear Agnes from that quiet slumber, which might prove so blessedly refreshing. And after a short lapse of time, every moment of which became more insupportably oppressive, the small French clock over the mantle-piece chimed the third quarter of the passing hour, and just then the volumed clouds rolled off, and the broad full moon came forth, resplendently glorious, pouring into the chamber a flood of light, that streamed through the window opposite, full on the still hushed and motionless group. But the bright beams striking direct on the child's eye-lids, aroused her from her light slumbers ; though, long habituated to tender caution, the affectionate little girl moved softly, even in her half-awakened state, and gently raising her head from its resting-place on Herbert's knee, she looked up, as if into his face, but his head had dropt aside, seemingly weighed down by weariness, on the pillow of her still sleeping sister. Long and earnest was the child's upward gaze. But, at last, she rose up slowly and noiselessly, and with head bent forward, and hands hard pressed against her bosom, stood with eyes still riveted as if by fascination, on the faces of the unconscious sleepers. Then, half turning towards where we sat, she drew a short quick breath ; and with yet one reverted glance, as if in hesitation, stole noiselessly as a shadow to my side, and whispered in a voice tremulous with agitation—' How fast asleep they are !—so very fast !—and Herbert, do you know, must have dropt off so, just as he was slipping his gold

ring on sister Agnes's finger, for there he holds it still half on—do come and see.'

"The child's words thrilled through my very heart. To start up before they were well uttered, and approach the sofa, and bend over it, in nameless, speechless agony, was the action of a moment. There they were, as described by Flora. Hastily, forgetful of all caution, I pressed my hand upon the two pale faces, that lay almost touching each other on the pillow—hastily, and without fear of abruptly wakening them.

"There needed none :—The rude touch disturbed them not. They had already awakened in Heaven."

THE STOIC;
OR,
MEMOIRS
OF
EURYSTHENES THE ATHENIAN.

By JANE KINDERLEY STANFORD.

THE following tale was originally written without the most remote idea of its publication; its composition was the amusement of many hours of loneliness and of bodily suffering, which it enabled me to bear without weariness and impatience. The kind approbation of a few friends induces me to send it forth to the world; and I rely upon the mercy of my readers, not to judge harshly of a first attempt at authorship.

Norwich, 1834.

CHAPTER I.

BORN to affluence, and endowed with much mental and personal superiority, the hope and pride of a highly gifted father—the idol of a doating mother—the long and anxiously wished-for boy—I might be termed fortunate, and my destiny one of happiness. And so it might have been, perhaps, had not the power of my mind been so great, or had the sensibilities of my heart been less acute. As it was, my childhood was alternate sunshine and clouds,—my youth, a continual struggle between the intellect and the affections,—and my manhood, what was my manhood? I will call it happy, for spite of all my trials, all my doubts, and all my fears, *I was happy*; a beauteous star shed its soft light over my path, and guided my old age to bliss. That star is set, but the remembrance of its loveliness will never go from my mind; I too must soon follow it. Oh! may I indeed follow it to that Heaven it pointed out to me!

I was born in the eightieth year of the Christian Æra. Of my earliest years I remember but little. What was life to me *then*? A never-ending sun-beam, in which I basked contentedly and joyfully, enjoying the present moment without thinking of the next. And I had cause to be happy. Wealth procured me every reasonable luxury, and pain had never racked my body. If I had childish vexations (and what child has not?) I wept over them; but the memory of them passed away as the tear dried on my cheek.

Our family ranked among the noblest, as well as the wealthiest of Athens. My grandfather partook of the love for a country life, which was so eminently characteristic of a Grecian; and my father, I believe, inherited this feeling; for although his habits of life daily took him to the city, our residence was in the country.

Nor was it surprising that it should be so; for there was nothing in Athens which could tempt a man of independence and wealth to make it his home. The streets were strikingly irregular; the city badly provided with water, and the houses, with a very few exceptions, mean. The spaces of ground, caused by the burning or pulling down of houses, which had been inhabited by those citizens accused at various periods of high treason, added very much to the deformity of the city; this spoliation, if I may so term it, was committed by order of the government, and it

was not permitted to rebuild on the spot rendered execrable by the crime of the former possessor. The Areopagus also, which took to itself the immediate inspection of buildings, was a declared enemy to every innovation of the civil architecture; added to which, if a house were decorated above the rest, or even carried one story higher, a crowd of jealous observers suspected that this ostentation hid a pride and feelings, very inconsistent with the equality of a republic.

The extreme magnificence of the temples and public edifices, rendered the appearance of the houses even more abject and mean than they really were. The eye wandered from one extreme to the other, and as there was not the slightest link between them, there could be no beauty, no pleasure in viewing them together. The three hundred statues erected on the public places, and the porticoes of Athens, could not hide the deformity of the streets.

Such was Athens, the *Great Athens*; the birth-place of so many noble men, heroes, and philosophers; the nursery of the arts and sciences, the place where they were brought to perfection; and the point from which philosophy spread its rays over the rest of the world. Such was it when I lived; but how different may it be in your time, gentle reader. Time works a change in all things. Man is born and dies.—Empires rise and fall—cities are built where once the ocean raged—and the waves roll over what once were fields luxuriant in verdure. Athens, therefore,

may centuries hence, be more worthy the spirits which once breathed within her walls, and even thought her the most beautiful city in the world. But I have described my native city as I knew it; and was it surprising that the nobility of Athens entertained an aversion to inhabit a city where their houses were confounded with those of the populace and artizans? The country was open to them, and there they erected their mansions according to their wealth and their tastes.

My father had very early shown a taste for philosophy, and was considered the most learned Stoic of his time; and the peculiar tenets of his sect gave him an appearance of austerity which was very early and deeply impressed upon my mind. I cannot say that I ever *feared* my father, for his kindness to me was constant and unchanging; but I had a veneration for his talents, a deference for his superior knowledge, and an admiration of his character, which made my feelings for him very different to those I entertained for my other parent.

My mother was beautiful—and though possessing in a great degree this attribute, so uncommon among her countrywomen, for in Greece the males engrossed personal attraction to that point, that if there appeared a woman endowed with even a moderate quantity of beauty, her name was sounded from north to south, from east to west, and many persons would undertake long journeys to see her; but although, as I said, this had been the case with my mother, she lived an en-

tirely secluded life, apparently unwilling to show her beauty beyond her own household. I never knew her in good health, there was consequently a languor, a helplessness in her appearance, which won pity even from a child. While in her presence I learned to curb my boisterous mirth, because it increased her illness; in my father's company my spirits were subdued, because his, I had almost said, *stern* countenance chilled every feeling of merriment.

If I in vain expected from my father any manifestation of affection, I was richly repaid for my disappointment in the doating love of my mother. She caressed me, she fondled me—I was her plaything, her amusement, her joy—and fully did I return her tenderness.

I watched every expression of her pensive but beautiful countenance; I hastened with alacrity to obey her most slightly expressed request; I endeavoured to anticipate her wishes. If I suffered aught, I hid my sufferings from her, and while in her presence a smile was ever on my lips, for I early learned how much her happiness depended upon mine.

The greatest portion of my time was spent in her society, and for hours have I seated myself at her feet, my head resting upon her lap, and gazing upon the face which to me was so lovely, so beautiful, by the feeble light of the evening moon, while she would run her taper fingers through my curling hair, and bless her "sweet boy." This was bliss to my young

heart, a heart which learnt its tenderness in such hours as these, and which never could entirely forget it, when maturer intellect and cold philosophy taught me to look upon every thing with indifference and apathy.

As my father's fortune was ample, he allowed my mother to expend her dower in rebuilding and embellishing that part of his mansion which was allotted to her, and her female attendants, and was called the gynaceum.

The lower room or hall, which was the spot where my mother used to sit during the hot months of summer, was open on two sides to a beautiful and luxuriant garden, which boasted a large and choice collection of fragrant shrubs and flowers. The walls of this hall were of pure white marble, and pillars of the same material of the elegant Corinthian order of architecture, supported the room above, which was the winter sitting-room. The pavement was tessellated in the best manner, and in the centre was an elegant fountain, whose waters cooled and refreshed the air.

The winter sitting-room was hung with rich crimson silk, except in a few places, where the walls were adorned with figures and landscapes well executed in fresco; the floor was of cedar-wood highly polished; the couches were inlaid with gold, and covered with crimson silk, richly embroidered in gold. This room communicated with the sleeping apartments, which were fitted up in the same style of magnificence, combining luxury and comfort.

The garden was spacious, and gradually sloped down to the banks of the Ilyssus, the river, which among the Athenians is sacred to the muses; and from different spots we had views of the Temple dedicated to Diana the Huntress, which was erected on its opposite bank.

An elegant mind had guided my mother in adorning her dwelling, and its beauty and comfort made her the envy of her less wealthy or less tasteful acquaintances.

It was in these rooms that during my childhood I enjoyed the greatest happiness, and received my earliest instruction from my dear mother and her faithful attendant Zoe, who had lived with her before her marriage, and had performed the office of nurse to me. To Zoe I was an object of interest and love, and she shared with my mother my childish affections, and upon every occasion was exempt from the teasing tricks which I delighted so much to lavish upon the other and more menial attendants. Still was I a pet and a plaything with them all; and these hours of my earliest childhood gave me a feeling of tenderness towards the female sex, which I never utterly lost, and which influenced many of the most important acts of my life; whether I was the happier or better for this influence, let my Tale disclose.

CHAPTER II.

My father, in telling me of the annihilation of man, first alarmed me as to the state of my mother's health. *He* was calm when he mentioned the probability of her decease, but *I* shuddered at the idea of losing my beloved parent, and in an agony of grief I threw my arms round her neck, and exclaimed, "You shall not die."

She pressed me to her bosom, and told me how useless my grief was, at the same time declaring that the approach of death had for her no terrors. "You will not forget me, Eurysthenes," she said, tenderly kissing my cheek.

I vehemently swore by Jupiter and all the gods, that I would not; and she wept over me.

From that moment my love and my care for my parent were increased, and anxiety first racked my mind. I had formed no idea of death; I had heard of the death of persons, but had never thought upon the subject. What was life?—And what was death?—And why was my mother to die, so young and beautiful, when I daily saw aged and decrepid people living on?—Could nothing avert the event from her? And if she died so young, so might I, and I wished that the same moment would end our lives. My

favourite dog had died, and was I to lose my mother by the same means? Surely this brought a familiarity, a similitude between the brutes and a being I so much loved; one I thought so superior to all others, which should not be. My dog I had buried in the earth, and she also would be buried, and the sole difference between their graves would be, the marble column which would mark that of my mother. 'Tis true, there would be more ceremony in consigning the remains of my parent to the earth, there would be oblations and prayers to the gods; but of what use were these ceremonies, if they did not save the body of my mother from being debased to the lowness of the animal creation? Of what use were the oblations and prayers, if *she* derived no benefit from them, and *I* no consolation?

I thought of her body as lying for ever in the grave; and although I felt that she would not be taken entirely from me, and, that resting on her tomb, I might still imagine myself almost in her presence, there was a dreadful melancholy in knowing that she would be insensible to my approach; that I might call upon her, but that her sweet voice would never again answer my calls; that I might weep upon her grave, but that her dear arms would never more embrace me; that never again should I find a resting place for my troubled spirits upon her bosom, and never again be soothed into peace and happiness by her tender endearments.

My uncertainty as to the nature of death, my dread of its approach, and my bewildered ideas upon the

subject, made me anxiously watch every change of my dear mother's countenance. Every sigh she heaved I feared was a precursor of the separation I so much dreaded, and every fainting fit I thought was death. How often did I steal on tiptoe to her bed-side, and in spite of the whispered remonstrances of Zoe, rob my hours of their sleep, to watch the dear slumberer; and when I fancied she was about to wake, glide away, because I knew she would chide me in gentleness, for not having retired to rest.

With agony did I see the branches of acanthus and laurel placed over the door of our house, in token of the sickness within. My mother's long tresses of dark hair were cut off, and in the principal hall were consecrated to the infernal deities; and most fervently did I join in the supplications offered to Mercury when the pangs of death approached. In all the religious rites practised at this time I bore a part; I knew not precisely for what they were performed, but they were in some manner, which I could not understand, connected with the welfare of my parent, and that was sufficient to gain my attention and interest.

My mother sunk gradually and calmly, her beauty increasing as her life drew to its close; her last action was to press my hand and my father's together—her last look was mine—and my lips received her last sigh—and at twelve years of age I stood beside the death-bed of her who had so fondly cherished me; immoveable in my sorrow, unconscious of all around me, save the pale, inanimate form on which my eyes

were fixed. The wailing and lamenting of the women at length aroused me, and I tore myself from the spot. *My* lamentation was in the secret recesses of my heart, deep and lasting. All that I loved was gone ; I had no consolation, no comfort left me, save that of dwelling upon her tenderness for me.

After the attendants had washed and anointed the body, and, according to custom, arrayed it in a splendid garment, I again pressed my lips upon the cheek, and the touch spread chillness through my frame to my heart. I gathered the best flowers of the garden, and such as had been her favourites, and strewed them upon the bier ; placing upon her breast one of those locks of my hair which she had so often delighted to twist round her fingers, and which were now cut off as an outward sign of mourning.

I had frequently in my visits to my mother's apartments, surprised her and Zoe reading a book, which, upon my appearance, was invariably shut, and put into a little ebony chest inlaid with silver, and the key being turned upon it, was deposited in the pocket of my mother. In early years, when literature was a task rather than a pleasure to me, this circumstance was almost unheeded by me ; but as I increased in years, and knowledge became interesting to me, my curiosity was awakened, and I frequently asked my mother to tell me what it was about, and to let me read it. This, however, she constantly refused to do, at first evading my questions ; but as they became more importunate, she told me I was not old enough

to understand her studies ; and if I endeavoured to extract from her a promise to let me see it when I should be older, she would give it conditionally, the fulfilment resting upon my father's approbation. Thus my mother's book became to me an object of intense curiosity and interest ; a something with which increase of years would make me acquainted, a pleasure promised for the future.

After her death, when my father, in examining the different chests, came to open the small ebony one where she had kept those articles which she most valued, I anxiously looked for *the book*, and cannot express my surprise, consternation, and grief, at not perceiving it.

I looked towards Zoe, as if expecting that she would explain why it was not there ; but with her eyes fixed upon the different articles as they were separately taken from out the chest, she either did not understand the silent question I had put, or if she did understand it, she was determined not to answer it.

Resolved not to be so foiled, I said, "Zoe, where is the ———." She would not let me proceed, but with a secret sign to me, she replied in a hasty, bustling manner, "Here is the little bracelet you wished to see ; it is the last my dear mistress wore."

I did not attempt to repeat my inquiry then, for it seemed unpleasant to Zoe ; therefore in the hope of gaining a more direct answer, when we should be alone, I remained silent. An opportunity of speaking to her soon offered itself, but she positively refused to give

me any information upon the subject, adding that my mother, in her last illness had made her promise not to give me the book, without the consent of my father. She would not even give me an idea of its contents, and even hinted that she thought it very improbable that my father would ever suffer me to read it.

I thought Zoe was unkind to me in this instance ; in every other whim and caprice she fully indulged me, and at all other times I felt that I had still a kind and loving friend left to me.

CHAPTER III.

EDUCATION in Athens was conducted upon a general plan, to which the parents of children conformed, with very slight exceptions. Boys till the age of seven years were taught to read by the Grammatists; they were then taught music by the Citharistes; and after their thirteenth year it was usual for them to be consigned to the care of the Pedotribes to learn the gymnastic exercises. And so fascinating and delightful were these exercises to some of our robust youth, that they delighted to signalize themselves in wrestling, pugilism, and races of every kind.

I have said that my mother was more beautiful than the generality of the Grecian females. A perfect symmetry of form was one characteristic of her loveliness, and this I inherited, joined to a firmness and fullness properly belonging to a male. I knew that my father delighted in my personal advantages, although he had never so openly praised my handsome features and figure as my dear mother had done. Perhaps it was as well for me that he did not, otherwise I might have become vain and effeminate; as it was, I loved to hear my mother praise me, but all the vanity which might have been raised by her encomiums, was quickly banished by the more judicious

conduct of my father, who early instilled into my mind, the great superiority of mental over bodily perfections. Nevertheless I am inclined to think, that his unwillingness to permit me to follow the gymnastic exercises beyond a certain point, arose from the fear of injuring the contour of my form.

He was aware, that the nervous system of man is capable of a certain degree of tension, only. Beyond that point, it loses in one part what it gains in another. In boxers the hands are strengthened at the expense of the feet; and in racers the feet gain what the arms lose. The equilibrium of the strength in all parts, is destroyed by a particular force, which being purely *made*, soon degenerates into weakness. The juices of the frame fly to those parts which are most and continually in motion; and where this is not the case, the too great perspiration which violent exercises induce, enfeebles the human body, by taking from it a large quantity of the moisture necessary for its preservation.

I therefore did not bestow much time on this branch of my education; I learnt to swim, to ride, and a very little pugilism. But my time was almost wholly devoted to study. I passed successively under the government of the Grammarians, Critics, and Geometricians, and then came the studies under the Philosophers.

The Grecian Philosophers had a stronger aversion than other Athenians to live in cities; but as it was not convenient to be far from the capital, which was the depot for the instruments and assistance which the

arts and sciences required, they settled themselves in the environs of Athens; and their gardens extended from the shores of the Ilyssus to those of the Cephisis. The Epicureans were established in the centre; Plato's disciples to the north; and those of Aristotle to the south. A hedge of myrtles, or a row of olive trees, forming the only division between those schools, so much at variance in the doctrines they taught to their followers; yet, as all were situated on the same soil, so all their precepts tended to gain one end, perfect goodness, wisdom, and happiness. They were untouched by the perturbations of the passions; peace never forsook their breasts; each day was to them a day of enjoyment; and the solution of a problem was a matter for rejoicing. Seated in the shade of their gardens, they smiled to see a crowd of fanatics, and ambitious men, agitated, like the reeds by the least breath of wind, by the slightest ruffle of the passions.

But my father was a Stoic; and his school was situated in the middle of Athens, under the Portico painted by Micon and Polygnotus and called the Pæcile. Instead of seeking solitude like the other sects, the Stoics chose the centre of the city, where they were continually surrounded by the noisy populace. Here my father taught, and here I learnt my philosophy. And it undoubtedly required more power over the mind to fix it to the contemplation of abstruse objects, when liable to the bustle, noise, and interruption of a busy multitude, than when, secluded in the shade of trees, there was scarcely the shaking

of a leaf, or the humming of an insect to distract the attention, and call the mind from its profound contemplation.

My studies now became abstruse and deep. My father conversed with me as with an equal in years, knowledge, and understanding. And as a bust of Zeno, the founder of the Stoic Philosophy, stood before us, the cherished ornament of my father's study, he taught me to believe in his tenets. He taught me that God was pure ether, or fire, inhabiting the exterior surface of the heavens, that he was underived, but indefinite. He taught me that the agency of the Deity was merely an active motion of the celestial fire; that Providence was only absolute necessity. He assured me that virtue was the only true wisdom; and happiness the end and motive of our lives. He urged me, as a means to attain perfect wisdom and happiness, to subdue all my passions and emotions, to be alike insensible to pain or pleasure. But when he told me that death was only an *interruption of life*, that the soul was material and remained with the body, till fate, or necessity, and the law of nature, should renew life, I could not conquer the thrill of joy which ran through my heart, at the hope that my mother would again live. Though uncertain when she would return to life; and if I should ever again enjoy her company, I loved to imagine the happiness which *might* be mine once more.

But the school to which I now belonged, and the philosophers who were now to be my guides, taught

indifference to pleasure, and insensibility to pain. And so well apparently did I follow their instructions, that my father expressed his entire approbation of my conduct. Alas, he knew not the misery of my mind ! My feelings were by nature acute, my passions strong, and my affections deep. I endeavoured, I laboured to overcome my emotions, and was chagrined to find it not the work of a moment. Every day tried the strength of my philosophy, and I was perpetually at war with my feelings, consequently I was in a constant internal agitation. I knew that I should not be blessed with calmness and peace, till my philosophy gained the ascendancy, and by annihilating every passion and emotion, bring my mind to that quiet state, which it was the study of a wise man's life to arrive at, and which alone could produce the happiness after which my soul so anxiously aspired.

It was no merit of my own that I gained some empire over the softer affections of my heart ; from no one now did I receive a show of that tenderness which had been lavished upon me in infancy. My ears no longer heard expressions of love ; the arms of an endearing mother were no longer thrown around me ; my forehead was now never pressed by the lips of an affectionate being. All my tender emotions and feelings were therefore, for want of encouragement, thrown back upon my heart, useless, unblest, and un blessing. And if they existed, it seemed to be only in the moments when I thought of my beauteous parent ; upon nothing could they rest but upon the

memory of *her*; but so intimately were they connected with *that*, that while my mind retained the power of recalling the past, my heart would beat with fond but vain affections still.

At those times, when my mind relaxed from its sternness, and my philosophy was scarcely thought of, it was my delight to wander in my mother's apartments, and to tend the flowers and shrubs in which she had taken so much interest and pleasure. The same anemonies which she had planted, and which were her favourite flowers, were increased with the utmost care; the pomegranate which had been the pride of her parterre, was multiplied; but more especially was the myrtle tree, under which we had been so often seated together, the object of my attention; every dead leaf within my reach was carefully plucked off, and every withered branch lopped; not a faded flower was allowed to sully the whiteness of its sheet of blossoms. And this was my occupation at those times when my heart dwelt with most tenderness and sorrow upon the beloved parent I had lost.

I was thus employed one evening, when my philosophy scarce controlled my feelings, and believing myself to be unobserved and alone, I indulged in delightful retrospections of the past; when Zoe, who had stolen upon me unheard, said, "That was her favourite tree, Eurysthenes; how often has she talked with me under it, talked of you, and prayed for your happiness then and for ever. I can never forget the sweet conversations we have had upon this spot."

The melancholy tone of the faithful creature brought the tears to my eyes ; but ashamed of my weakness, I turned my head from her that she might not see them. But she knew I wept, for she said "Aye weep, do weep. It is no sin to weep for the loss of so much goodness. I have lost the best friend I ever had, and you have lost a fond mother. Oh ! you know not what you have lost, Eurysthenes. But I will pray that you may be happy, and that her loss may be restored to you in some other way. You are young, and have a long life before you ; pray ——." She hesitated a moment, then added, "may it be as happy as hers was !"

"But," I said, "Zoe, she will live again ; my philosophy teaches me that death is merely an *interruption*, not an *end of life*. Oh ! think of our happiness when we shall meet again."

"Yes," said Zoe, solemnly and mournfully, "she will live again, but not as you imagine."

"What do you mean ? shall I not again be blest with her society, her love ?"

"I know not," replied Zoe, "it is not for me to give you instruction on this subject. But, my dear young master, do not stifle your grief, give it vent ; it is natural ; a gush of tears will relieve your heart."

"Nay, Zoe, it is unmanly, it is worse than unmanly, thus to lament at the workings of a fate we cannot control. I will, I must conquer this weakness ; it is the desire of my heart to overcome weakness of every kind, and to become indifferent to every thing. In

that indifference consist the highest wisdom and happiness of man."

Zoe shook her head mournfully, "And will you forget your mother, and become indifferent to her memory?"

I looked reproachfully at her, and plucking a small sprig of the myrtle, placed it in the folds of my dress on my bosom. She understood my answer.

CHAPTER IV.

I HAD already been enrolled among the citizens of Athens, and rejoiced that I could in truth boast a fellowship with the heroes of my country, in whose daring and brave exploits I delighted, and with the sages, whose wisdom I venerated, and whose sanctity of life I wished to imitate. But a more glorious and delightful event awaited me in my initiation in the Eleusinian mysteries, a custom which was now falling into disuse among the Athenians, but which my father, who as much as was in his power still adhered to the ancient customs of his country, wished me to follow, and I was proud that the knowledge of a man would be imparted to me.

My father, ever anxious to improve my understanding, was unwilling that I should enter into these ceremonies, as some of my fellow-countrymen did, thoughtlessly, and without being acquainted with their true meaning. He, therefore, for some time, made it the subject of our private conversations, explaining to me every particular relating to them.

He told me that the lesser mysteries were designed by the ancient theologists, the founders of them, to signify occultly the condition of the impure soul invested with a terrene body, and merged in a material

substance. And, as intimating that the life of the soul, when merged in the body, is nothing but a dream.

I was thus, by the assistance of my father's explanation, led to consider these mysteries, not merely as the worship of Ceres and Proserpine, conducted with great and imposing show, but was able to apply every part of the ceremony to the connection of the soul with the body. And far from being terrified at the loud noises which, in the initiation, assailed our ears, at the earthquakes which we witnessed, or the demons which appeared to us, I considered them all as representing the descent of the soul into a corporeal nature; and the omniform and horrible monsters, I looked upon as signifying the various vices of our irrational part.

The mysteries, therefore, were highly interesting to me; and while many youths of my own age were enjoying the mere splendour and novelty of the ceremony of their initiation, it was to me an event of the utmost consequence, and induced me to profound thought and study. I felt more strongly than ever the debasement of my soul while connected with my body and the vain passions of my corporeal nature; and the desire to make them subservient to the high and pure nature of my soul, led me to love my stoic philosophy, which taught me the means of attaining that end.

If the shows of the Lesser Mysteries, which were intended to represent the miserable and unhappy condition of the soul while subservient to the body, were thus so deeply interesting to me, how much more so, were the Greater, which intimated by mystic and

splendid visions, the felicity of the soul, when purified from the defilements of a material nature. And it was with the utmost impatience that I awaited the time of my initiation into them. The month of Boedromion, (parts of September and October,) at length arrived, and with joy I accompanied my father to Eleusis. The representation by these Mysteries of the beatific state of the soul, in the Elysian Fields, now exalted me as much as I had felt debased by the contemplation of the terrors and miseries of Hades. I was possessed of a soul, and it was to be the work of myself to gain its admittance into that happy region. Then, away all ye passions, pride, anger, love; I scorn your power! the purity of my soul shall quench your dazzling but fallacious brightness.

Taught, as I had been almost from my infancy, the immense power and value of the intellectual part of our nature, and urged by the exercise of that power, to elevate my soul above all earthly feelings and dominion, was it wonderful that after my initiation, Ceres and Proserpine (the former as the emblem of the *intellect*, and the latter as that of the *soul*,) became my favourite goddesses, that their images were placed in my little study as its greatest ornaments, and that they shared more of my attention and homage than Minerva, the tutelary goddess of my country.

Still I was not perfectly satisfied with the state of my mind. There was something yet wanting to complete the happiness I sought for. My father gave me praise and encouragement as regarded my studies; but

I was not happy, and as I felt that I was not so, an unbidden but almost unchecked sigh would burst from my bosom to the memory of my dear mother.

I had no intimates; I did not enter into the pleasures of my age; I seemed in truth abstracted from the world, almost from all realities, and buried in the doubts and hopes of my philosophy. For there were moments when I doubted; moments when, with a recklessness which I afterwards blamed, I almost determined to relinguish the tenets of the Stoic, nay, to discontinue the study of all philosophy, and to give loose to my inclinations and passions. This perhaps arose from the conversation of my almost only friend, and certainly my most intimate acquaintance.

He was an Epicurean, that is, he had been educated in that school, and had believed what had been taught him, for he had never troubled his mind with study. We were accustomed to compare the leading principles of our different schools; and shall I own that there were moments when I almost yielded to the arguments he adduced in favour of his, and was somewhat dazzled by the picture he drew of his happiness.

Happiness, perfect and uninterrupted, was the aim of my philosophical researches, the desire of my soul. I looked at the smiling countenance of my friend, and contrasted it with the solemn expression of my own. I thought of all the indulgencies he allowed himself, and of my own austere life; the pains it cost me to deaden every feeling, which it was his study to enjoy and to increase. I was young, and all this made an impres-

sion upon me; for a moment I wavered. Then again I called to mind the high and ennobling studies I pursued, and I felt that if light and enlivening pleasure were not mine, that my mode of life, and my opinions raised my soul far above his; and I in my turn reasoned with Alcmenes, upon the folly of delivering his soul and existence up to sensual pleasures, and endeavoured to impress upon him the superiority of my belief over his.

"Nay, Eurysthenes," he would say, "you are the very Prince of Stoics, but the Epicurean philosophy is best adapted to my temperament. I cannot reason upon any thing; a life of ease and pleasure is fitted for me, and I yield to my feelings."

I reminded him, that the wine-cup would at length be drained, that there were times when objects were wanted to create his mirth, and that beauty faded in his grasp.

"Then, we will fill the cup to the brim again, we will quickly find other beauties, and laugh to think that we can so soon renew our pleasures."

"Still," I said, "there will be a moment of cessation of pleasure. How much better then is it to steel yourself against all its fascinations, and by regarding every thing with indifference, never to receive pain or pleasure from any object, belonging to us *externally*; but by making our internal powers, our intellect and our soul, the constant objects of our attention, endeavour to ensure our happiness."

"Ah!" Alcmenes would say, smiling, "we are both

travelling to the Elysian Fields ; my path is strewed with flowers, yours is rough, hard, and to me far from enticing."

And I could never reason him out of his pleasures, nor could I entirely persuade myself that he was wrong. There was something in my nature which warred against my intellect, a discontentedness with myself while I owned the beauty of my philosophy ; a restlessness of thought and of feeling, which continually urged me on to attain bliss, but which was as constantly unsatisfied.

CHAPTER V.

I HAD very early been betrothed to my nearest relative, and at the age of twenty-four I yielded to my father's wish, and married. I considered this event as one of necessity, and did not expect from it any great increase of happiness. It was well for me that I did not, otherwise I should have felt the events of my married life too deeply, to have borne them so patiently as my indifference to my wife enabled me to do.

As at the death of my mother, so also at my marriage, every ceremony enjoined by the custom and religion of my country was strictly observed. Agathonica had been presented to Diana, and had given her tribute of curiosities to that goddess ; and the usual sacrifices and oblations were made to the gods.

It was determined by those friends who had the arrangement of every thing on that eventful day, that our wedding should be as splendid as possible ; and Agathonica did not make any objection to such being done, for I had obtained a name in Athens, and she felt some pride in showing that she was connected with me ; added to which, she had already, on many occasions, manifested, as far as a secluded female could

do, a love of splendour and ostentation, and a desire to enjoy to the full the luxuries which our joint wealth could procure her.

I was passive ; my friends did with me as they pleased, I assented to all they proposed, but I suggested nothing ; and I attired myself in the splendid garment prepared for me, with as little pride and pleasure as I put on my usual every-day habiliments. To one thing only did I pay any regard, it was that my garland might be of anemonies and violets intermixed ; these I gathered myself, and gave to my bride a similar garland ; and when I saw it bound upon her forehead, I felt it to be the first act which installed her in the apartments of my mother, who had planted those flowers in the garden from which I had gathered them. And I pictured to myself a happiness awaiting me, something like that of my boyhood.

In the evening the bride was conducted home in a chariot by torch-light, and attended by singers and dancers. We had some distance to travel, her father's house being situated on the opposite side of the city to ours. At the end of the journey, the axle-tree of the carriage was broken, and burnt, to signify that the bride would never again return to her former home ; and we entered our house amidst a shower of figs and various fruits, which our friends plentifully poured upon us.

For three days I was compelled to act the bridegroom, but rejoiced that the fourth day left me free to

follow my former studies, and usual manner of passing my time.

I was not an inattentive husband, though perhaps owing to my tenets of philosophy, I was not a *loving* one. My wife was to me the same as other women : I had not married her from affection, for I not only never had felt love, but considered it as a feeling and passion which debased the soul of man. But the time I devoted to relaxation and amusement was spent in her society, and as I considered myself free to act as I pleased, I left her the same liberty, contenting myself with the idea that she had the same means of being happy that my mother had possessed. I never controlled her wishes in any respect ; her person was adorned with jewels, and she had numerous attendants to wait upon her ; she had beautiful apartments to inhabit, and wealth at her command ; the sole object of her life was to amuse herself. Yet all this did not satisfy her.

Every kind of luxury directs itself necessarily towards two objects, which are often combined together ; that is, ostentation and the pleasure of the senses. I have said that Agathonica loved show and ostentation, and as I never restrained her actions, she took every advantage of the many opportunities which the religious feasts and processions gave of displaying her wealth. Her chariot was magnificent and sumptuous, drawn by white mules, which were procured with great difficulty and at much expense, from Peloponnesus ; but they were at that time the test of property,

the envied acmè of fashion, and Agathonica could not appear without them. In this equipage she, soon after the birth of our first and only child, went to the mysteries of Eleusis, which was the spot where all met for pleasure and enjoyment, and there she formed an acquaintance with Maximinian, the Roman Governor of Athens. And in a very short time after she left my society for his.

For a moment I was chafed by the circumstance, but it was only for a moment, and I very soon regained my Stoical apathy. Indeed I endeavoured to palliate her conduct ; I considered the female mind as incapable of understanding philosophy, and being quite aware that the worship and belief of my country was very little calculated to guide the conduct, taught as it was by fables and representations revolting very often to decency, I thought of her failing rather with pity than otherwise.

Agathonica left me my child, and I scarcely knew whether to rejoice at the circumstance or not. Zoe's look was sorrowful as she put my infant into my arms ; I almost shrank from taking her. Why should I cherish her ? *She* might also deceive me. Yet, oh ! that face, so innocent, so fair, so like my mother's !

"Yes, yes, I must, I will love you, Hermione," I said, as she smiled upon me, and for an instant I pressed her to my heart. "Take her, Zoe, and do not forsake her, for she will stand in need of your care."

"Forsake her !" said the poor old woman, the tears

falling fast upon the head of her little charge. "For-sake her, sir! I served your mother and loved her, and these arms have nursed and fondled you when you were young and helpless. They are old now, but they can still nurse this tender babe, and my heart can still love your child, and *her* grandchild. And I will teach this little one to love you also, and you will live to bless the day that made you a father."

I own I had wished for a boy, a son to prolong our race as lecturers at the Stoa, but my girl was like my mother, and I was content. Yes, she was so like that lamented parent, I could not but love her with all the warmth my cold philosophy would allow. I, who, to others talked of, and inculcated as a duty an indifference to the softer feelings of our nature, loved, fondly loved my child, and when alone with her lavished a thousand endearments upon her. My first kiss had been imprinted upon her soft baby cheek without witnesses, and my caresses were bestowed upon her in privacy. She brought back to my nature all the tenderness I had felt for my mother, and seemed to link me more closely than ever to her memory.

Zoe was right; I did live to bless the day which made me a father. I have rejoiced in the life of my child, and I have mourned her death. And I have reason for much rejoicing, for she was chosen by thee, O God! to teach me a belief in thee, and in thy works; and in that belief I found the best consolation, when thou thought fit to call my child from earth, to place her among the angelic spirits of heaven.

CHAPTER VI.

YOUTH has been called the blest period of man's existence. It has been likened to every thing beautiful, and every thing beautiful has been likened to *it*. Then, it has been said, are man's spirits joyous, his body vigorous, and his heart light. He smiles at the petty vexations of past infancy, and the cares of a later age he laughs into distance. Mirth, with her sunny smiles, greets him at every turn—pleasure strews her sweetest and fairest flowers in his path—the colour of fancy's wings beams more brightly—every thing bears the stamp of truth and innocence—and gentle hope gilds the future. Such we are told is youth.

But was my youth such? Alas! No. *My* spirits were chilled—the feelings of *my* heart were deadened—vexations, joy, and pleasure, all were alike unheeded, and unfelt. Imagination and fancy lent not their aid to lighten the cares of life. Restless and unsatisfied, I thought not of the past, I enjoyed not the present time, but anxiously looked forward to the future, when a perfect wisdom would bring me—what? happiness—derived from a subjugation of all my emotions and passions. The attainment of that point was the end and aim of my life, and ruled my every action and every thought; for *that* I studied unceasingly.

My father was dead, and I was left alone, save the tender infant who looked to me for support and protection. There were times when melancholy reflections pressed themselves upon my mind and upon my heart, and I almost envied my father's fate, and wished to be as he was. I had a high veneration for his wisdom and character, and doubted not that he was enjoying the blessings which our philosophy promised to those who could raise their souls from all terrestrial feeling and connection. Yet when I looked at the little infant before me, I felt how much she needed my protection and guidance, and resolved to do my utmost to guard her against a fate similar to her mother's.

Agathonica I constantly heard of, and frequently saw. How could it be otherwise, when dwelling in the same city? I heard of her extravagant luxury, for she had ample means of indulging this failing, as although our divorce had not yet taken place, I had returned her dower, determined that Hermione, who knew not that her mother was living, should have no link with one who had so debased herself.

Whenever I visited the female apartments, Hermione's little arms were open to me, and she would cling to me as to one she loved. And Zoe had taught her to love me, and did well for both of us in so teaching her. In her childish games I often found a relaxation of mind, which nothing else could have given me. And as I have watched her innocent countenance, and artless gaiety as she gamboled about me, I have

not unfrequently called to my remembrance my infancy, and almost wished that I was again a child. Then would come a moment of absorption, as my philosophy expelled such thoughts, and my little Hermione, at such moments, would seat herself at my feet, and patiently wait till the fit was over, and I again could find inclination to play and to laugh with her. She very early seemed to understand my humour, and never did she give me pain or uneasiness. Sometimes she would caress me, when she perceived I was more than usually ruffled in temper, and her little winning endearments would bring serenity to my mind. She would bring me the sweetest flower of the garden, or call my attention to the song of her favourite bird, not unfrequently imitating and rivalling him in the clear tones of her soft and flexible voice. She would walk with me, she would garden with me, or she would sit by my side silently. Her temper, her patience were never wearied; her greatest happiness seemed to consist in being with me, and a single kiss, a kind word from me, would in an instant bring a smile of joy upon her countenance.

Was it strange, was it wrong that I should feel some affection for so sweet a creature? I sometimes thought it was, and would forbear visiting her. I know not what she suffered at those times, but I seemed to have lost something necessary to my existence. Oh, had I then known true religion, how much misery might we both have been spared! But it was decreed otherwise; and I lived in darkness, doubt, vexation and

trouble. Tormenting my mind with speculations, of which I knew not the fallacy, although I felt they did not fully satisfy my soul ; and torturing my heart to overcome feelings and emotions from which spring some of our sweetest and dearest enjoyments and happiness.

And years were to pass, and I was to continue in this state ; and more years were to pass before I could relinquish the philosophy, which I had hugged to my soul ; a philosophy which made this life almost a burden to me, without giving any decided or clear promise of future bliss. But these years passed away, and I did relinquish my philosophy, and almost too late did I give loose to all the fond affections of my nature. My happiness was short, but it was great ; and now that it is gone, and that I am an old man, tottering on the verge of the grave, I am content ; thankful for the bliss I have enjoyed, resigned to my present lonely state, and looking forward with cheerfulness and with hope, to the time when I shall be called to enjoy once more the society of my beloved child, in those realms of peace and happiness which she taught me to believe, are the dwelling-places of the good.

CHAPTER VII.

AT this time Christianity was making great progress, though secretly ; for it was a crime at Athens to introduce the worship of new gods. I daily exerted myself in my conversations with my friends, and in my lectures to my pupils, to guard them against giving into the belief of the Christians.

But while thus exerting myself, I was not aware that this new religion had taken root in my own house.

To Zoe I had given the charge of my child merely instructing her in some branches of her education myself ; and the education of an Athenian female seldom extended beyond the use of the distaff, and general domestic affairs. I was satisfied if she attended to the rites of our religion, seldom explaining the intentions of them to her ; leaving to a future time, when age should have matured her intellect, to teach her some of the tenets of the Stoics. Indeed, she was little more than an amusement to me ; seeking her society, as I have before said I did, as a relaxation from the intense study which I still pursued. These intercourses endeared us to each other ; and it was not till she had attained her eighteenth year, that I was

alarmed as to her religious opinions. And when I first began to be suspicious of her being a Christian, I did not immediately question her upon the point, because, I not only thought it impossible for her to differ in opinion to me, but I could not imagine how, in the perfectly retired manner in which she passed her time, she could even hear that there was a new religion sprung up, and much less who could teach it to her. For I was ignorant that Zoe, the friend and tutoress of her infant years, had always been a Christian, being a descendant of the woman Damaris, who had been converted to Christianity by the preaching of Paul at Athens.

But soon was the truth of my conjectures to be confirmed. I one day sought Hermione in her apartments; I did not tread unusually light, but she did not hear my approach, and I surprised her reading intently, *my mother's book*. I approached, and as she lifted her eyes and discovered me, a confused blush overspread her face; she rose from her couch, still holding in her hand the book, I had so long, so anxiously wished to see.

"Hermione," I exclaimed, "that book. Tell me, what is it? I have from my boyhood sought for it; how came it in your possession?"

"It is the word of Christ," she replied calmly, but in a subdued tone.

My hand had been stretched towards it, but I immediately shrunk from touching it.

"Tell me, how came you by it? How long have you had it?"

"Zoe gave it to me ; and it was your mother's."

"And did my mother, she whom I loved, who I thought all virtue, all goodness, and did *she* read that foolish manuscript? Was my mother, whom I loved so tenderly, and deeply, a Christian?"

"Father," said Hermione, "her virtues and her goodness were derived from the study of, and her belief in the words of this precious book. It was her daily companion ; to read it was her first occupation in the morning, and her last at evening. And, father," she continued meekly, but firmly, "*I* also am a Christian."

I did not raise my arm to strike my child, though never before had my anger been so aroused. I upbraided her with disobedience, I told her I had long entertained suspicions of her religion. I cursed Zoe as having been the means of leading her into such delusions. I scoffed at her belief; I ridiculed the sect of which she had avowed herself a member. I denied the existence of the Divine Power, and of any Gods, but those which my country owned. In my agitation I seized her arm, "Swear," I exclaimed, "swear by the great Jupiter, by Minerva, the goddess and protectress of your country, to renounce this damnable belief. Return to the worship of your forefathers, or be for ever a stranger, and an outcast from my affections, my care, my house."

"Father," replied Hermione, boldly and without

trembling, "you have taught me the duties due from a child to a parent; you have taught me to love, reverence, and obey you; and still do I love you, oh how dearly!" and a tear glistened in her eye. "I reverence you, and I will obey you in every thing, save in renouncing my God. *He* also is my Father, and to him is due love, honour, reverence, and obedience, even greater than is required of me towards my earthly parent. It is not lightly that I have embraced the faith of the Christians. It is not from a single reading of this manuscript, that I firmly believe in its words and promises; I should not have been led from the faith of my forefathers, had I not felt convinced it was a faith to be abhorred. I have thought by day and by night, I have reasoned constantly; and the more I have thought, the more I have reasoned, so the more firmly have I felt assured that I have chosen the right path. This book has taught me, that there is a God above all other Gods, a Ruler of the universe, the Creator of all things. It has taught me that there is a Heaven to which we return after death, and are rewarded or punished according to our deserts. It has taught me that *He*, whom we call Jesus Christ, was sent to teach us mortals the path to eternal life. It contains his precepts, his words; and it promises happiness greater than we can conceive, for those who obey the will of his Father who sent him. I say again, I have not embraced this belief lightly and without deep consideration; but I have embraced it upon a firm conviction of its truth and blessedness. I knew that

from you, I should meet with much opposition ; and I have already suffered much in disobeying your precepts. If you do indeed cast me from you, I will pray that your heart may be softened ; and as I have ever done, that you may come to the knowledge of the true God. A time *will* come, it *must* come, when my belief will be your belief, and when we shall worship the same God. But if till that time come, I must be an outcast from my paternal roof, and if I must choose between my father and my God, much as it will cost me to renounce one so long and so dearly loved, yet will I do it, though my heart should break in the effort." As she spoke she was much agitated, her cheek was flushed, and my own proud spirit flashed from her dark eye, the darker and brighter for the spirit which moved her. A moment over, and the soft temper of my mother shone upon her fair brow, as she murmured in meekness, "Father, forgive me."

I was angry, bitterly so. Still would I endeavour to point out to her, what she must suffer, if cast off by me ; nurtured as she had been in ease and affluence, guarded from every ill and every distress, how could she endure the scoffs and taunts, nay perhaps the bodily sufferings, with which her sect was visited. She listened to me attentively, as I pictured her probable fate ; but she was calm and steadfast.

"All this," she said, "I have thought of, and all this I *can* and *will* bear, rather than purchase the ease and luxuries of this temporal life, at the expense of my happiness hereafter. I am a female ; but God, who has

willed that I should come to a true knowledge of him, if I hold fast my faith, will, I trust, give me strength to bear the torments of mind and body which may await me. If you cast me from you, into his hands I commit myself, confidently and joyfully."

My heart still clung to her, spite of my disappointment and anger. I knew how strongly the kindest feelings of our nature were implanted in her heart, and again I attempted to make an impression upon her, by representing the happiness we had enjoyed together, and what I must suffer in my declining age, if I separated from her. As I spoke, the colour fluttered in her cheek, her bosom heaved, and her eyes were cast down.

"Father," she replied, "I acknowledge I feel all this. For past love and care I am grateful, and never can I forget the happiness of my youth. Oh, if you could read my heart, you would know how fondly it clings, and ever must cling, to you, my only parent. But still," she continued with firmness, "I cannot, must not, *will* not, renounce my God."

I took her hand in mine, and pressed it; "Once again, Hermione," I said, "I, who never before supplicated to any one, will beg of my child, *beg* where I might *command*, to renounce her errors and return to the worship of her country."

"Father," she said earnestly, and clasping her hands, "dear father, in mercy do not tempt me to lose my soul, for the enjoyment of a little happiness *here*; if happy I indeed could be, while subject to the upbraidings

of my own conscience, upon the holiest and most important of subjects.”

In wrath I left her, and hurried into the garden: there for a time I suffered the most poignant grief. Could I indeed cast from me one I loved so dearly, who had been my pride, my joy, my solace? For a little difference in opinion upon a subject upon which many now differed. Yet was I not firmly wedded to the religion of my country? Had I not taught it publicly to thousands, and was I to be chafed by a female? I, who had disputed with the first philosophers of the age, and of almost every country, and who was myself the head of my sect, was I to become the pupil of a child, to be induced by her to renounce what had been established for ages, for the doctrines of a poor wandering people, of whom we had not heard till the last century? No, forbid it philosophy! forbid it reason!

Sleep came upon me, but with it also a dream most horrible.

Methought I was upon the point of plunging a dagger into the bosom of my child, as she stood before me, calm and unmoved, seeming to await the stroke with a pitying mournful tenderness of expression in her beautiful countenance. Suddenly my head became giddy, my sight failed me, and my hand sunk powerless, and the most horrible torments assailed my quivering flesh.

Impenetrable darkness surrounded me; the air, if it were air, pressed heavily upon me; an indescribable

restlessness pervaded my body and my mind ; not a sound met my ears, but the stillness around me had no calmness, no soothing power. Still my mind retained its energy, and my heart its feelings. Tenderness and love for my child came with tenfold strength, only to increase my agony. It was in vain that I recurred to the past ; happiness sprung from nothing, from nothing could I derive consolation or alleviation of the racking torments of my mind.

Nor were the pains of my body less. It was not the burning of my limbs before a raging fire—it was not the gnawing of my entrails by beasts of the desert—it was not the crushing of my bones beneath the wheel of torture—it was not the ringing of the waters in my ears while drowning—it was not the hot and parched suffocation of the throat—it was not one of these pains separately which assailed me, it was the combination of them all, in their utmost power of torment. I would have destroyed myself, but it was in vain that I struck myself with the dagger, it had not power to kill ; and a vague and imperfect feeling came across me, that I was never to die. I could look back to the beginning of my life, I could count its years by its sorrows ; but when I attempted to think of the probable termination of my existence, I could fix no time to end my anguish ; my life became one lengthened term of misery, lengthening and lengthening as the wish to end it increased ; and again that horrible feeling that I was never to die, came across me stronger than ever.

A change, a blessed change came over me ; and again I saw my child. A wide space was betwixt us, yet were her features distinct ; a bright light seemed to surround her, which though effulgent beyond the power of conception, did not dazzle ; it was calm, steady, beautiful, and increased the loveliness of her countenance. A smile of exquisite sweetness beamed in her eyes, and played round her mouth, as she held her outstretched arms towards me, as if inviting me to cross the gulph between us, and join her, where all seemed quietness, peacefulness, and bliss.

Methought that the action of putting forth my hand to catch hers, relieved me from my torments ; all pains left me, and happiness again returned to me. The start of joy at being thus suddenly released, awoke me ; and in reality did I behold my darling child smiling upon me with the same sweet smile of love as in my dream ; my hand also met hers in a prolonged grasp of joy and tenderness.

I found, that after a time becoming alarmed at my not returning to her, she had sought me in the garden, and finding me in a troubled sleep, she seated herself beside me, carefully watching every movement of my agitated countenance, and gently wiping away the big drops of perspiration which the agony of my dream had sent to my skin. Often as she heard my moans, and saw my convulsive starts, was she tempted to awake me ; but the recollection of the anger in which I had parted from her, and the fear that it had not subsided, withheld her, and it was her intention to

have left me when she saw I had become calm ; but my awaking suddenly prevented this.

My anger was gone ; a tear of tenderness and agitation sprung to my eye ; she saw it not, and it fell not upon her cheek, as her head rested upon my bosom. *That had been* its destination, but my habitual self-command and subjugation of passion, sent it back again to its fountain.

At parting that evening, Hermione did not, as had ever been her nightly custom, throw her arms round my neck, but with a pale and trembling lip, she said, "Father, to-morrow ——"

"To-morrow," I replied, without looking at her, "to-morrow we meet again, Hermione."

As she left me, I heard her utter fervently, "My God, I thank thee !"

The morrow came ; my child was calm, attentive, and observant of her usual habits ; but her step was slower, her cheek paler, her voice trembled occasionally, and her eyes, instead of being turned towards me in love, as they were wont to be, were cast down. How much I missed those fond looks, which ever greeted me ; fain would I have recalled the sweet smile which ever dimpled her cheek when addressing me. I asked her to sing, but it seemed to me that her voice had lost somewhat of its melody ; she answered me, when I addressed her, softly and sweetly, but she now never started a subject for our converse. I watched her at her employments, they were still the same ; but if she embroidered, methought her hand

moved less skilfully ; in tending her birds, I did not hear the little imitative chirp with which she used to encourage their warbling ; and even her flowers seemed to have lost somewhat of their attraction for her. I thought her drooping, without a murmur, without a sigh. Oh ! if she had given vent to reproach and to anger, I could have borne it better ; but to see her so gentle, so tender, yet so mournful ! I could not bear it, and after many days of misery to us both, I one evening took her hand, and said,

“Hermione, if blame must attach to one of us, let it be to me. I dare not think of what my duty is, but I cannot part with you. Never recur to what has passed between us ; I leave you free to act as your judgment shall tell you is right ; I wish there had been no matter of difference between us ; but we may still be happy together. I will hold to the faith of my country, but you are free to follow the worship of the Christians.” She would have spoken. “Nay, do not thank me. Let it be a subject upon which you never speak first. But Hermione, be happy, and again make your father so also.”

She sank into my arms, and a flood of tears relieved her. Now again was she my lovely, my beautiful, my happy child ; though I could detect a softened joy in her manner, a sweet pensiveness now marked her countenance ; and when I rallied her upon the loss of the bright smiles I so much missed, my heart smote me as being the cause of their banishment, and I felt grateful for the efforts made to recall them.

Thus did I allow myself to be conquered, and my philosophy conquered also, by my love for my child; and many were the moments in which I blamed myself, nay almost repented my leniency towards her. Yet when in her society, I almost felt that she might win me to anything.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHRISTIANITY spread, and particularly among the lower class. I had hitherto considered the common people as unworthy of instruction. Therefore I now felt my pride mortified, and saw myself, and the science to which I pretended, eclipsed by the illiterate among the common people, whom I had so much despised. In this state of mind I endeavoured to console myself with affecting to despise those who despised me, and at first, without demeaning myself to examine the historical evidence of the facts on which Christianity was founded, I superciliously contented myself with considering it as a *new thing*, brought into the world by obscure persons, with a crucified malefactor and some fishermen at its head; besides, although there were some of our rites which I despised, I conformed to them, being seriously persuaded, that things of such venerable antiquity were of a sacred nature. Still was my mind restless and unsatisfied. I daily heard of fresh converts to the new religion; in my own home I witnessed the purity of a Christian's life, and I felt very much inclined to examine their doctrines. I had forbidden Hermione ever to mention the subject to me, but I was resolved to have some conversation with her upon it, and to

discover, if possible, if it were indeed a happier and a more reasonable belief than my own.

"Tell me, Hermione," I one evening said to her, "when I blamed you for renouncing the religion of your country, did you not in your heart curse me?"

"Curse you! No, father. I was miserable and unhappy, but I endeavoured to be resigned."

"Hermione," and I seized her arm with firmness, "if my hand were raised against your life, would you not curse me then?"

She turned pale, and fear was for a moment in her countenance; "No not even then would I curse my parent, I would ——" she paused, and looked fixedly in my face.

"What would you, Hermione?"

Looking upward with an indescribable sweetness, she said, "I would pray my God for forgiveness for you."

Her look, her manner, so sweet, so solemn, struck to my heart, and loosing my hold I turned hastily from her. She saw that I was moved, and I repented my want of self-command, and my weakness in allowing her to see it. It was the first time that she had hinted at her religion, and months again passed in silence upon the subject.

But during those months I had not been idle; I had studied, I had thought of, nay, I had even held conversations with Christians upon their belief; and what induced me to do this? My unhappiness, and I do not blush to say, my love for my child. When an infant,

left as she was to my care in a peculiar and unfortunate manner, I thought I loved her for her helpless innocence, and for the resemblance she bore to my mother. In youth, Hermione still grew upon my affections, and I found I loved her for herself; and sometimes I blushed for my love, and sometimes I cursed my cold philosophy; still I could not but love her. Her beauty, her gentleness, her feminine sweetness, and her talents, stole upon me year after year, and spite of all my endeavours, I found she became more dear to me. Her strict obedience to my will, her forbearance when I had so strongly tried her temper, led me not only to admire her, but to inquire into the nature of that belief, which enabled her thus to overcome her passions, apparently with so much less difficulty than my Stoic philosophy enabled me to root mine from my breast, nay, and much more effectually so too. Her life seemed to be smooth and unruffled, while I was continually agitated, with heart and mind constantly at variance. Yet my doubts and struggles did not appear outwardly; then might she not suffer also unseen? No. That face so calmly cheerful, could not belong to a writhing heart, and a troubled mind. Even her deepest thought seemed to be blest, for her brow was unmarked by care; happiness alone seemed to have made her pure heart his dwelling-place, and to beam in her youthful countenance. To be so happy she must be virtuous, and moreover wise; and I must learn such wisdom and

such happiness. But reason alone must guide me, and I must not suffer my affections to influence me.

Our religious conversations were now more frequent ; I asked her many questions, and she always answered me with modesty, yet with a full understanding of the subject. One evening, while sitting under my mother's myrtle tree, the following conversation took place between us.

"And you think," I said, "that we may indulge the affections of our nature?"

"Certainly I do. I think that all our passions and all our feelings were given to us for a wise purpose by our Creator ; the good ones to be encouraged to his glory, and the evil ones to try the strength of our virtue, and to insure our future reward and happiness by being overcome. I wish," she continued, throwing one arm round my neck, and looking sweetly in my face, "I wish, my dear father, I could persuade you to forget your philosophy, and to let your heart love me, as well as it wishes to do. Nay, do not shake your head."

"My heart will love you in defiance of my reason, my girl, and though my philosophy forbids it. It is a very foolish heart, Hermione."

"Oh ! no, no, not foolish, my dear father ; consider we are alone in the world together, not a single relation beside myself have you ; and who have I so dear to me as my father ? Why then should we not love each other *very* dearly ?"

"My philosophy teaches me not to love or hate

anything ; and in truth I have found but little in the world to wish to love."

"I on the contrary," said my smiling child, "love every thing. This beautiful flower," plucking a pomegranate bud, "I not only admire for its beautiful colour, but I love it because it forms a part of the creation. I love the birds that sing around us, and that clear and rippling river ; nay, I love the very earth on which we tread. And if I can so love inanimate things, you may judge how dearly I love you, my father."

"You say you love every thing, yet every thing will perish, Hermione ; and to lose what we love must cause pain, then surely it is far better to live in indifference. The birds will cease their songs, and become a mass of corruption and putridity ; that flower will fade, and its brilliant colour will change to one unseemly to your eye."

"True, father. But other birds will be in life and sing as sweetly ; and other blossoms will show themselves as beautiful, and console me for the loss of those that have died and faded."

"And I, Hermione, must also pass away and become a mass of corruption ; will then another father be given you?"

"You will indeed be taken from me ;" she said seriously ; "but even then I shall not be without consolation. Our separation will be but for a time, and though it will be grievous to me for a time, how-

ever short, yet I have the conviction that we shall meet again in Heaven, never more to part."

"And your flowers, and all that you love, will they also be given to you in your Heaven?"

"I know not, nor can I exactly understand of what my happiness hereafter will consist. But I am willing to think that you, who have been the cause of my greatest happiness here below, will also contribute to the greater, purer, and more blessed happiness which is promised to me hereafter, if I so conduct myself as to obtain eternal life. But call it not *my* Heaven only, father, it is the Heaven for *you*, and for all; it is the everlasting home to which we shall all return."

I asked the grounds of her belief in a future life.

"I am promised it by Jesus Christ, and believing most firmly as I do in Him, I believe in his promises also. I am but a poor ignorant girl, and cannot argue with you; what I tell you of my belief, I understand, and I feel it to be right; but there are many points, which being less essential to guide my conduct, I do not attempt to study or to think of; and for an explanation of those points, I refer you to our good Bishop Quadratus. But I can reason a little with you," she continued, smiling, "in the way of your own dear philosophy. Is not happiness the end and aim of your studies, and your life?"

"Most assuredly it is."

"Well, it makes me happy to encourage my belief in a Supreme Creator, and in a Heaven; therefore it would be folly in me not to believe. If it be a wrong

belief, and I should sink into the grave, and rot into nothing, body and soul together ; still I shall have been happy, and therefore, according to your philosophy, I shall have been right. But if I am to die, only to live again in another world, if this body is to decay, but my soul to rise again, will it not add to my bliss to know that I have not wilfully disbelieved and denied what my Creator has so mercifully taught us by *his Son* and *our Saviour*? Oh! how sincerely, how fervently do I wish that you would think as I do?"

"That, Hermione, may never be."

I said it might not be ; but from conversations such as these, I did not rise without reflection, and my philosophy was shaken. I became a less frequent attendant at the Pœcile Portico, and I began to shun the society of my former friends. To doubt the truth of the philosophy in which I had been educated, was the first step towards renouncing it. Still I was resolved not to do so lightly, and without a strict examination of the reasons for Christianity.

CHAPTER IX.

I WAS in a state of uncertainty and doubt ; a state which cannot last long ; it is unquiet and painful. Although many and great misfortunes have fallen upon me, my life has never been so constantly disagreeable to me as in this time of trouble and anxiety ; when wandering from doubt to doubt, I gained little from my long and frequent meditations than uncertainty as to the cause of my existence.

To doubt of things which it is important for us to know, is too violent a state for the human mind, it will not remain in it long ; it will decide in one way or another, and loves better to deceive itself, than to believe nothing.

What increased my embarrassment was, that having been brought up in opinions (for I cannot now call it a religion) which did not admit of a doubt, one single point rejected, made me reject many others.

I again perused the writings of the different philosophers, who had dictated to mankind ; I examined their several opinions, and sometimes thought them positive and dogmatical, and proving nothing. I thought of the melancholy fate of mortals, floating on the sea of human opinions, without rudder or compass, and abandoned to their violent passions, without any

other guide than an inexperienced pilot, who knows not his route, whence he came or whither he goes. I felt that to know the truth was essential to my happiness ; I sought it, but I could not find it.

What made the foundation of my Stoic philosophy better than those of Epicurus or Plato ? Then why, again, were the Christian opinions concerning the formation of the universe more rational, and nearer the truth, than those of Zeno ?

I had been taught that this universe was a sentient and animated being ; and my doubts led me to examine more carefully than I had yet done the nature of matter and its properties ; and after this examination, I felt so persuaded that the natural state of matter is rest, and that it has not in itself the power of motion ; that when seeing a body moved, I judged it either to be an animated body, or that motion had been communicated to it.

Yet this universe is visibly matter, and matter in motion too ; how then could I prove that it is not animated and sentient ? I must judge of it by analogy, I must compare it with something, and nothing so readily presented itself as fit for my purpose as myself ; and this comparison induced me to think that this world is not a great animal which moves of itself, for I could not discover that it has anything of the union, organization, or feeling, common to the parts of an animated body. It is in motion, but in its regular and uniform motion there is nothing of that liberty which appears in the spontaneous movements of man.

Thus was one point in the doctrines of my philosophy rejected; I will not say that I readily rejected it; for who can, without some feeling of reluctance, allow the fallacy of an opinion which he had entertained almost from his birth? But I did renounce my former belief as to this universe being animated; and if *inanimate*, it could not be *sentient*. And *I believed that there was a something, a cause, a will, which moves the universe and animates nature.*

And if the motion of matter proved to me a will, the perfect order, and harmony of the different parts of the universe, gave me the idea of an intelligence to direct that will.

This intelligent principle, this Being who wills and is able to perform every thing, the Christians called God; and in acknowledging the power, the existence of this first and intelligent cause, *I also acknowledged a God.*

What now became of the doctrine of chances and combinations? Of fate and necessity? I could no longer believe that matter passive and without life, had been able to produce living and feeling beings; or that a blind fatality had been able to form intelligent creatures; or that things which have no power of thinking could produce beings who have.

I acknowledge a God, and to this name I joined ideas of intelligence, power, and will; and goodness which is the necessary result of these. I knew that he existed, and that he existed of himself; and that my

existence, and that of all other things was subservient to his.

I perceived God in all his works ; in the heavens which encompass the earth ; in the stars which shine upon us ; in the bird which flies ; in the stone which rolls on the ground ; and in the leaf which is shaken by the wind.

After having discovered those attributes of God, by which I came to a knowledge of his existence, I returned to the study of myself ; and sought to know what rank I occupy in the order of the things he governs.

I find myself incontestably in the first ; for by my will, and the instruments which are in my power to execute it, I am more able to act on all the bodies which surround me, and to make them subservient to my wishes, than they are to make me obey them ; and by my intellect, I am the only one who can survey the whole. What being on this earth besides man, can observe the other beings, foresee their movements, and the effects of them, and join, as I may say, the feeling of a common existence with that of his individual existence ? It is true therefore, that man is the king of the earth he inhabits, and I am proudly content with the situation in which I am placed. But this place was not my choice, and was not given me as a reward. How then can I feel myself thus distinguished from the other creatures of the earth, without congratulating myself upon filling a situation so honourable, without blessing the hand which placed me in it.

I came to the conclusion, *that man is free in his actions, and being so, is animated with an immaterial substance, which makes him accountable to God for his actions. And that Providence has made man free, that he may do good, and not evil, by choice.*

Thus came I to a belief in God, in a world to come, in a day of judgment, and in future rewards and punishments. *I became a Christian.*

Oh ! what an immense, what a wonderful alteration did this belief work upon my feelings ! My misfortunes, my unhappiness, have been great ; but patiently will I await the time, when, freed from my mortality, all trouble shall cease, all pain vanish away, and in the presence of my God I shall sing glory and praise to the Everlasting ! and enjoy the contemplation of his infinite goodness, in the company of just men made perfect, and of my darling child, who first taught me that this life is but a pilgrimage, and who first led me to a belief of a God, and of a Heaven. Bless thee, bless thee, Hermione ! Thou wert my joy on earth, and thou savedst my soul from perdition.

Thus have I endeavoured to give, as briefly as possible, the reasons which actuated me in changing my religious belief ; and of embracing those opinions, for the holding of which I had almost sent my only child a solitary outcast upon the wide world. Oh ! how did my heart now repent of what I that day said to her, and how sincerely did it now seek to repair those harsh words, by the increased tenderness with which

it now beat for her. Increased, because I felt I might indulge it without danger to my eternal welfare, and because it had something of gratitude mixed with it, as I looked upon her as having been the cause of the important changes in my opinions and feelings.

Might I indeed cherish love for my child and for my mother, without blushing at my weakness? How shall I describe my feelings at that moment, when I suffered the tender emotions of my nature to fill my heart, without a wish or an endeavour to overcome or to curb them. I cannot describe the impetuosity of my feelings, my yearnings to embrace my beloved Hermione, and to tell her that the time she once so confidently spoke of was arrived, when her God was become my God, her belief my belief, and that we cherished the same hopes of a life to come and eternal. I felt no humility in owning to my child the change in my opinions.

But although the relation of my conversion has been brief, my conversion itself did not take place in a few days or weeks. I had many early and strongly imbibed prejudices to overcome, and it was many months before a perfect change was completed. During that time I did not mention the subject to Hermione, resolved not to do so while there remained the smallest doubt in my mind upon any point. But now that all doubts were cleared away, all prejudice conquered, and that I had learnt to know the true cause and end of my existence, I was anxious to make her acquainted with a circumstance which I felt would

so very much increase her happiness ; and I longed to humble myself in prayer to my Creator, in company with my darling child.

“Hermione,” said I to her one day, “you will be prepared to welcome to our repast to-day one of my most valued friends.”

I forebore to tell her my intention, and never shall I forget the expression of her countenance when I entered our hall, with Quadratus, the Christian Bishop of Athens. Astonishment, doubt, and joy, alternately depicted themselves in that dear face. I opened my arms, and she threw herself upon my bosom, and a few tears of gladness chased each other down her cheeks.

“I am now a Christian, Hermione,” I said.

“You, my dear child, have been the chosen instrument to work out my conversion. I little thought, when you were put into my arms a helpless infant, that you were to win me from the idolatrous worship of my forefathers, and to lead me to the study of myself, of the universe, and thereby to a knowledge of God. Heaven bless thee, my child ! and may I ever be grateful for the precious gift bestowed upon me in you.”

My child’s heart was too full of joyful feelings to allow of her speaking ; but she took my hand and one of Quadratus’s, and pressing them together, she imprinted a kiss upon each.

I that evening tasted greater and purer happiness than I ever before had known ; seated under my

mother's myrtle tree, we passed it in conversation, and in reading that book, which was now become as dear to me as to Hermione, and from which my touch did not now recoil.

The majesty of the Holy Writings astonished me, the sanctity of the Evangelists touched my heart. I owned that the books of the philosophers; with all their pomp of learning, were nothing compared to that; and I there now sought for the rules and precepts for my conduct; which, but a few months before, I thought were contained in the writings of Zeno and his followers only.

Nor was I content in professing the change in my opinions to my particular friends only, but I resolved to become, by baptism, a follower of Christ. Hermione, who in deference to my paternal authority had not yet gone through the ceremony, expressed a wish to be baptised at the same time.

We therefore presented ourselves together at the font, and Quadratus blessed both father and child.

CHAPTER X.

Our happiness was of short duration ; but a few years elapsed between my conversion and my persecution for the belief which I had embraced.

Christianity had spread widely, but every where we heard of the rigours with which the Roman government visited its professors. Imprisonment, banishment, torture, nay death, were dealt out to our brethren with an unsparing hand. Edict upon edict closely followed each other ; neither age nor sex were allowed as an extenuation of the punishment doomed to the followers of Christ. Grey-headed men were condemned to die a lingering and excruciating death, and the agonies of mothers with infants at their bosoms were not less.

At Athens, we however, as yet, remained untroubled ; although, while pitying our friends in distress, we thought of what probably awaited ourselves. And while I gazed on my beloved and beautiful child, I shuddered ; how could that delicate, alas ! at this time too delicate, frame, bear immurement in a prison ? Those youthful limbs might be tortured and wounded. I thought of this, and the tears rolled down my cheeks. I fervently asked the Almighty that all suffering might fall on me alone.

By prayer to heaven, by reading, and by exhortation, we endeavoured to encourage in each other a firm reliance upon the Divine will.

The blow came ; I cannot describe the agony of that hour. I scarcely know what took place generally ; I was stunned, my mind, my observation, were unhinged and put to flight by the intensity of my anguish. I only saw my beloved Hermione torn from me, and knew not whither she was carried ; without one parting embrace was she taken from me ; the rude hands of the soldiers held her back ; it was in vain that she implored for one kiss, one blessing ; they would have intercepted our looks had it been in their power, but it was not ; and after a deep glance of agony we were separated, leaving to either but little hope of meeting again, save in that heaven to which we prayed for fortitude and patience.

In my prison, deprived of every comfort, and almost necessities, the agonies of my mind were tenfold more than those of my body. My child, my child, where was she ? I thought of her loveliness, of her goodness, and my heart yearned to her with greater love than it ever had done before. Were my trials never to cease ? was I doomed always to be miserable. Oh God forgive me, that in my hours of agony, almost of distraction, I dared to murmur against thy decrees.

I had but lately rejoiced in the soft affections of humanity, and now they served to increase my sufferings. I could not now recall my Stoical apathy ; my feelings had lately had full exercise, and I could not now bid them leave my breast. I wept, I mourned, and in prayer only could I find an alleviation of my misery.

Weeks thus passed, and with joy I hailed the summons to appear before the governor of Athens. That governor was Maximinian, and I knew not whether to expect mercy, or increased severity from him, on account of the connexion between us. I cared but little for myself, but I hoped, though not confidently, that Agathonica's heart would soften in behalf of her child, and that she possessed sufficient influence with her paramour to obtain a pardon for Hermione.

I had been in the hall of justice some moments with my fellow-sufferers, before the females, who were also to be tried that day, appeared, and was still uncertain as to the fate of my child ; so far uncertain at least, that although I knew that upon her separation from me, she also had been conveyed to prison, I was ignorant whether she was to undergo her examination that day or not.

At length the females entered, and my impatient eyes soon discovered my darling Hermione among them ; she walked slowly, with her eyes bent on the ground, and it was some time before she lifted them to survey those around her ; but in that hasty glance she quickly recognised me, and with outstretched arms, she uttered a piercing shriek which sounded through

the hall and drew all attention to her ; then lifting her eyes to heaven, she seemed to utter a prayer, and again her head dropt, and with her arms crossed on her bosom, she stood perfectly still and motionless. The colour which had for an instant rushed to her cheek, had fled, and left her pale and colourless as the purest marble ; but for the gentle heaving of her bosom, the beholder might have imagined her a statue, she was so pale, so still. The rigours of confinement had taken somewhat from the roundness of her figure, but she still looked lovely ; and while the praises of her beauty were murmured through the assembly, even in that hour of trial and of sorrow, my heart was proud and joyful, as I claimed that young creature as my daughter. I watched the countenance of Maximinian, and thought that it relaxed in its sternness as he gazed upon her ; even the lowest of his attendants seemed to regard her with admiration and pity ; and so strongly did I feel that to be the moment to sue for mercy and pardon for her, that I should have fallen upon my knees before the governor, had he not that instant called forward some of my companions for their examination.

Seldom were my eyes removed from that one dear being ; I endeavoured to watch the changes of her countenance as the trials proceeded ; she still remained in the position which she had taken upon her entrance ; and except that an occasional shudder passed momentarily over her frame, as the blows inflicted upon the

interrogated were distinctly heard, I should have thought her unconscious of what was passing.

My turn arrived. I looked calmly in the face of Maximinian, but he shrunk not; I was almost tempted to upbraid him with the injury he had done me in early life, but my spirit was too proud to make that a plea for generous treatment at that time.

Now did Hermione show symptoms of animation. Her eyes were fixed with intense earnestness upon me; the colour fluttered in her cheek, her hands were clasped, and with head slightly bent forward, and parted lips, she eagerly awaited my answers. Once the attendant's rod was held over me, and my child saw it about to descend.

"Mercy!" she cried in agony, her clasped hands stretched towards Maximinian, "Mercy, for my father!"

A smile of haughty derision curled the lip of the governor, as he said, "Do you ask mercy from me? I had been told that the Christians felt not the pains of the body, when bearing them for their religion's sake; or if they did feel them, that to one source only did they look for mercy, and that they scorned the power I hold."

"Yes," replied my child with bold firmness, and standing proudly erect, "We Christians do scorn the power you arrogate to yourself in the affairs of our religion. But you have done well to recall my thoughts to where indeed we can alone look for mercy and compassion, and I thank you that you have done

so." Then sinking on one knee, the expression of her uplifted countenance being now only that of humble piety, she said, "Father in heaven, forgive me, that my earthly passions and anxieties made me for one instant forget that from thee alone can we hope to receive justice and mercy. Thy will be done, and oh ! grant us strength to bear without a murmur, whatever thou in thy wisdom and goodness seest fit to afflict us with." Then again turning proudly to Maximinian, as she rose, she said, "Now do your worst. Our hope is in heaven. Father, let us bear our misfortunes as though we felt them not, and if they reach even to death, let us yield our lives in firm faith of Him who died for us, and in a full and perfect assurance of a happy life in a world to come."

"You speak nobly, fair maiden," said Maximinian, "and show that you inherit the pride of your family. I will question you as to *your* belief; methinks you will give me judicious answers, nay, perhaps you will convert me."

"Would that I could convert you, and make you a follower of that religion and faith, which even in this hour of sorrow, speaks comfort and consolation to its believers."

He then proceeded to question her as to the faith of the Christians; my child answered him firmly, without fear, yet still retaining the modesty of her sex. She said the kingdom of Christ was an angelic, not an earthly one, and would commence at the end of time, when he would come in glory to judge the living and

the dead, and to give to every one according to his works. That according to the principles of Christianity, all mankind, without any distinction of high or low, rich or poor, are equally candidates for a happy immortality.

A slight colour tinged her cheek as she spoke, and often the fervour of her piety made her manner not merely earnest, but energetic; but when she had finished, her head again sunk upon her bosom, and she appeared meekly and patiently to await her sentence.

There was a perfect silence for some time in the hall, and Maximinian seemed to be ruminating upon the punishment he was to award to the young creature before him. He more than once looked towards her, and then at me; at length he said, "Have you no favour to ask of me, young maiden?"

"I fear you will scarcely grant any request from me, a poor, persecuted Christian," replied Hermione, in a tone and manner which implied that she was not anxious to be obliged to him for the grant of a favour.

"Nay, judge not so harshly of me," said Maximinian, almost conciliatingly, "Your youth pleads somewhat in your behalf; and I feel inclined to be lenient towards you."

"Then," replied Hermione, "I will make one request. Do not separate me from my father. Whatever punishment awaits him, grant that I may share it."

"You have unfortunately made a request which does not agree with my half-formed intention of taking

you into the household of my wife, to be her constant attendant."

I could not refrain from showing my surprise and indignation at such a proposal, and I sternly said, "Maximinian, you know me. I do not now speak to you as a persecuted Christian and a stranger, but as an injured husband and loving father. I am astonished at the proposal you have made, that Hermione, my virtuous and innocent child, should live under the same roof with Agathonica. If you meant to insult me, know, proud man, that although unfortunate, I have a spirit which will not tamely brook unmerited insult; and, in my present situation, it is mean to add insult to your tyranny. I know that I am in your power, and that if you please you can at this moment take my life. But I do not fear you. I have been silent many years; I have never upbraided you; but attempt to bring my child in contact with her miserable mother, and though immured in a dungeon, I will find some means to free her, and to avenge myself for all my injuries. Nay, Hermione," I said, observing her surprise at my words, and taking hold of her with one hand, while with the other I pointed to Maximinian—"Hermione, do not be alarmed at my earnestness. I have hitherto carefully concealed from you the unhappiness that man brought upon me, the injury he has done us both. A governor of others ought, methinks, to be possessed of a heart firm in good principles, and a character to which not the slightest taint can attach. He is appointed, or takes upon himself, to deal justice

to every one, from the highest to the lowest of those over whom he rules; he is to administer the laws with fidelity and truth, to rich and poor, to wise and simple; he holds his power in trust, and is accountable for its right application to the people, to his king, and to his God. Maximinian is a governor; and has he, does he act thus? Let his conscience answer what laws he has transgressed, what rights he has invaded, what injuries he has committed. Look at him, Hermione, and in him behold the seducer, who, I know not by what blandishments, tempted your mother to leave her home, her husband, and her child, her young and helpless child; and he has now the baseness to offer to that child a home in his own house, that she may be a daily witness of her mother's ignominy. Shame, shame, Maximinian!"

My wrath was roused, yet I spoke not passionately; but he quailed before me. A murmur, low but general, rose from the assembly, and the anger of Maximinian was manifest in his agitated countenance. He muttered something of death.

"I care not," I said, "take my life, and my last breath shall pronounce your infamy."

"Death were too speedy an end to your sufferings," he replied; "no, Eurysthenes, I condemn you and your proud child to perpetual banishment in the Island of Ælanthe."

Hermione clung to me, partly in terror, and partly in love; I strongly pressed her to my bosom, and throwing my arm around her, seemed by my strong

grasp to be fearful that she might yet be taken from me.

There are some islands on the coast of Ithaca, which are scarce better than barren rocks; no trees grow on them, a few weeds only give signs of vegetation; no animals inhabit them, and even the birds of the air forsake them.

Such an one was *Æanthe*; but dreary as the prospect of living there would have seemed to others, I dreaded it not, while the treasure most prized was left me. For myself I cared not; I could endure any privations, but I trembled for my child. I was fully convinced that the strength of her religious principles would enable her to endure every hardship without a murmur, that her mind would not fail her under any trial, but I feared her bodily strength. The few weeks that she had been condemned to inhabit a prison had made a visible alteration in her appearance, in which there was a delicacy which strongly reminded me of my dear mother; and I shuddered as the idea of her sinking prematurely crossed me.

CHAPTER XI.

I WILL not attempt to describe our feelings upon leaving our beloved Athens; beloved, because it had been the birth-place of us both; our happy home. We did not give utterance to our thoughts or griefs, but with hands clasped in each other, we stood upon deck, watching the coast which receded from our sight much too quickly. In silence we lost sight of it; and in silence we landed upon our new and dreary land.

I had not formed a wrong idea of my child's strength of mind, and fortitude in adversity. Many were exiled with us, but Hermione was active among them, speaking consolation to the aged, and stimulating the younger by her words and example to activity and resignation. The comfort of each individual seemed to be the object of her care, and as far as lay in her power she contributed to it. All blessed her, and all followed her advice and example; and in a short time our little colony was settled, if not happily, contentedly; and we were brethren in love as well as in adversity. We set apart a small building as a chapel, and I was chosen as the pastor of our little community. My child had managed to secrete my mother's Bible, now the only one within our reach, and it be-

came a carefully guarded treasure, the common property of all.

But notwithstanding the activity of Hermione, I could detect a latent melancholy preying upon her constitution. Often would she sit silently and pensively; her voice was now never raised except in hymns to her Creator; and I found that that part of the shore which lay opposite to Ithaca was her most favourite walk, and never would she go elsewhere, when I left her to guide the way for our evening ramble.

Still she expressed no regret, no sign ever escaped her till within a short time of her death; when I not unfrequently observed her eyes fixed upon me, and suffused with tears, which she would quickly repress when she discovered I noticed her. I daily saw her declining, I saw her form wasting, and her strength failing. Others saw it too, and in their kindness offered me condolence and consolation. Alas! from them I could not derive lasting comfort. I saw my only earthly treasure gliding from my possession, yet I wept not. I could not weep, my grief was too deep for tears. She was the only tie which bound me to life, and made that life endurable; and that tie was to be loosened. From my birth, it appeared that I had been doomed to unhappiness; that amidst every apparent blessing, misfortune secretly haunted me. I had lost family and fortune, and now was to lose the only being who loved me, or whom I loved; that dear child, who from her infancy I had doated upon, even in contradiction to my principles; and now, when re-

ligion hallowed and blessed my affection, now when I felt that in loving her, I was fulfilling a law of nature and of God; she was to be taken from me. I wept not, nor did I murmur. I did not pray for the life of my child, for I knew that the Almighty, who had a knowledge of all my thoughts and wishes, would, if he saw good, grant them without my asking; he willed that she should be taken from me, and I submitted; but my almost hourly prayer was for her an easy death free from suffering, and for myself fortitude to bear the separation as becomes a Christian.

My sweet child was but a short time confined to her room. I daily read to her, and she constantly exhorted me to be resigned. She spoke of her near dissolution without fear or trembling; she said our separation would be for a little time merely, and she was abundantly thankful that she had been the means of leading me to the same faith and religion which she had believed in.

She sunk. Hers was the first grave dug in the little spot of ground which we had marked out for the burial place of the persecuted, and she was followed to that grave by the sighs and tears of those among whom she had been as an angel sent for awhile to suffering mortals, to show to them the inhabitants of the realms above.

What pleasure of life is unmixed with sorrow? What glory upon earth is of long continuance? All are more fleeting than a shadow, all are more deceitful than a dream! In one moment death endeth all. I

thought of the shortness of life ;—all human things are vain, which cannot survive the grave. Will riches survive ? or will glory attend beyond the tomb ? Where are the affections of the world ? Where the vain dream of temporary delights ? All, all passeth away like a shadow.

My child was taken from me, and now were we separated : Alas ! what a separation for me to bear with. She was delivered up to the grave, she was covered with the earth ; every sinful connection with life and vanity was now dissolved ;—the spirit had forsaken its mansion—the clay was disfigured—the vessel broken—a speechless, motionless, senseless body was lowered into the grave. Where now was the graceful form ? Where was youth ? Where the brightness of the eye ? The beauty of the countenance ? All are withered like grass. What is our life ? A flower, a vapour, the early dew of the summer morning !

In the contemplation of her virtues, while I mourned her loss, I found strong motives for consolation, for through them I had hope of her eternal felicity. Humanity permits me to be afflicted that she was taken from me, but the sanctity of her life consoled me for her loss ; for she is at rest. The Christian religion, and faith, which is as nothing without works, sprung up in her heart from her earliest years, and like the grain of seed in the Evangelist, it there became a great tree. She was humble, piously and discreetly so ; modest in her demeanour, kind, attentive, and careful of others. But why enter into these details ? She

was beloved by all who knew her, and by me how fondly doated on! Death tore this pure and beloved child from me in the flower of her age, and my grief bore testimony how much I had loved her. For I did not attempt to stifle my anguish. God wills that we should be firm from religion only, not from insensibility. The greatness of my loss justified my weeping, but I wept with moderation; I mourned, but I mourned not without hope; not forgetting the inestimable benefit which my bereavement had gained for Hermione.

Hermione! how mournfully, yet how fondly does my heart trace that beloved name! Twice loved, in my mother, and in my child.

I linger on the beach where we so often have watched together the setting sun and admired the golden and glorious light with which his sinking beams have tinged the ocean. I look at that ocean, and at the yellow sands faintly showing themselves through its thin waves; but where is she who used to watch with me its ebb and its flow, its gentle ripple, and its turbulent raging? I sit in her chamber, and muse upon her loveliness and goodness—my waking thoughts dwell upon her, and my dreams bring her back to me in all her infantine and later beauty—my friends come around me, and weep for her—they tell me of her virtues—and I bless God for having made me father to such a being!

Thus then I am alone. I have no longer in this world child or kindred. I am on this earth, as in a planet where I had accidentally fallen from the one I inhabited. My heart is purified by adversity—I am humble—years have passed over me, and age has stamped his mark on me. I think of the years of my childhood; they were innocent; and oh! if my youth was not without blemish, may the faith of my later years have atoned for my errors!

My love for my lost Hermione now partakes of a heavenly nature, it has become a semblance of that I bear to my Creator. Is this wrong? surely it cannot be. All earthly feelings for her have passed away from my heart. When I think of my God, I think of her; Him I reverence—her I love—and there is a holiness in my feelings.

My earthly love therefore, is without an object to rest upon; it had been centered in hers; hers had been all its devotedness, all its tenderness, all its depth. Now it must either become a load upon my heart, useless, and without joy, or it must be spread and shared among my friends. Friends! what friends have I, a poor outcast from society, a miserable exile upon a bleak rock! Friends! I have none but thee, oh God! To thee is devoted every thought, and in the contemplation of thy goodness, and in thy worship do I now derive all my consolation, all my happiness.

Holy religion! sure and ever ready refuge for the afflicted, let thy divine truths penetrate my heart; make me feel the nothingness of human things; inspire

me with a just disdain for this valley of tears and lamentation ; for this short life which is only as a path to arrive at that which has no end ; and fill my heart with this sweet hope, that the servant of God, who has been taken from me, enjoys in peace the reward of her virtues in the dwelling-place of the blessed ; and may I shortly join her there, and with her sing Hallelujahs to the Highest !

LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED.

Cicero's Nature of the Gods.

Pausanias' Description of Greece.

Herodotus.

Mitford's History of Greece.

Gillies' History of Greece.

Potter's Archæologia Græca.

Attic Nights of Aulus Gellius.

Taylor's Dissertation on the Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries.

THE LANSBYS
OF
LANSBY HALL.

THE LIBRARY

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

CHAPTER I.

A BLEAK January day had settled down into a night of continued snow. Every now and then a wilder gust of wind made the windows of the old manor-house rattle, and the party assembled in the dining-room draw closer to the fire. This consisted only of Mr. Merton, the proprietor of Merton Manor—a quiet sedate looking gentleman of about fifty years of age—his wife and daughter. The weather seemed to forbid the slightest chance of a visitor, and after a silent and somewhat hurried dinner, the squire drew a little round table to the side of the chimney, and sipped his wine, with his eyes intently fixed upon the burning masses of wood with which the fire-place was filled. After an unsuccessful attempt to discover a body to a splendid Turk, whose head he saw frowning majestically from a fragment of a pine log, he turned about in despair to his wife, and said, “I really wish, my dear, my father had taught me something or other to do in a snowy winter night. Drinking by one’s self is so desperately dull.”

“Can’t you take a book, Mr. Merton?” replied the lady; “here is a most beautiful story, ‘The Woes of Clementina;’ it will make you delightfully melancholy for a whole night.”

"No great miracle if it does, especially in such a dismal night as this. I haven't seen a soul for three days, and if this snow continues for twelve hours, we shall all be buried alive. What would I give now for some fellow to drop in! But who the deuce would move out in a storm like this that could possibly stay at home?"

Mr. Merton sighed as he concluded, and made a second attempt to discover the body of the Turk. But he was suddenly startled from this occupation by a noise outside the window.

"Wheels, by all that's happy!" he exclaimed. "I hear them coming down the avenue. There—they're come past the bridge—now they're at the garden corner—they're stopt—they're at the gate. Who can it be?"

"I told the butcher, as he returned from the market, to bring me the third volume of *The Orphan's Tears* from the circulating library. I hope he has brought it in his gig."

I hope no such thing. I wish the scoundrel may drive into the moat if he has raised all my hopes for nothing; but no—it was a four-wheel'd carriage. Why don't some of them go to the door?"

A bustle was now heard in the hall—somebody certainly came in—the words great-coat, portmanteau, bed-room, were heard in the dining-room—the door was thrown open, and in walked Mr. Nathaniel Clack, the very oldest friend Mr. Merton had in the world.

"Merton! my boy," exclaimed the visitor, as he shook hands with the whole party, "how goes it, eh? Capital night this for a visit—bad weather always makes a fellow so welcome."

"It doesn't need bad weather, Nat, to make you welcome here."

"Or any where else faith, if the truth must be spoken. No, no—hop here—chirp a little—skip there—gossip a little—never stay long in the same place—talk, dance, laugh—anything by way of a lark—then off like a shot the first glimpse I catch of the dismals."

"Ah, that's the way to enjoy life! You bachelors can fly about just as it pleases you. Where do you come from last?"

"From Harry Grumps's. You can't think what a queer old fellow he's grown. No more racket, no more whim—dull as a Dutchman—and yet can't help punning even in his bluest fits, and with such a miserable long face, that you are satisfied, if punning is a crime, he is doing penance for it in the moment of commission. We had capital fun for two days."

"What! even though Mr. Grumps was so melancholy?" said Mrs. Merton.

"To be sure—the very thing that kept us happy. There is nothing half so amusing as a fellow continually croaking—wishing the weather would clear up—that somebody would come in—that he had a liking for books—in short, regularly nonplussed for want of something to do. I always make a point of ridiculing such absurd hypochondriacs."

"Do you?" said Mr. Merton, poking off the Turk's head; "but you tired of it at last?"

"Why, yes, two days are quite enough; so, as it was a miserably bleak, raw, and gusty morning, I ordered my phaeton, and drove across the six-and-thirty miles, to bestow a little of my tediousness on you. Have you any news?"

"No, I don't think any thing has happened since I saw you last. I think I told you I changed my grey horse for a black one."

"Yes, so have I my wig—don't you see what a magnificent Brutus I am—in fact, grey hair is very unbecoming, and is only fit, as the Psalmist says, to go down with sorrow to the grave."

"Well, really, if you hadn't told us it was a wig"——

"My dear madam, don't go on. Do give us something original. I've heard that a dozen times, and never believed it a bit the more. What would be the use of wearing a wig if nobody knew it to be one? No, no—this is a coat, that is a boot, and this is a wig."

"Well, Nat, I'm happy to see you, wig or no wig, and here's your health."

"That's not original—do let us hear something new. I would travel from Dan to Beersheba to hear something out of the common way; but all mankind seem set on the same key. Touch any note of the instrument, it gives out exactly the same tone."

"By the by, Nat, do you know that Lansby Hall has at last got a purchaser?"

"To be sure I do—every body knows it—eighty thousand down, and forty more in three months."

"Who is it?" interrupted Mrs. Merton—"we don't even know his name."

"Oho—don't you?—why, 'tis a man of the name of Merivale. No one can tell where he comes from—immensely rich—nobody can imagine how he got his money. In short, he's quite a mystery."

"Is he old or young?" continued the lady.

"Young! oh quite a young fellow—my own age—fifty or so."

"Tall or short?"

"Oh, he's not a long overgrown monster of six feet, I can assure you. I heard, indeed, he was a very handsome, dignified-looking individual—grave, striking, distinguished. I should take him to be somewhere about my own height."

The lady smiled. "Have you seen him?" she said.

"No, not I; but we were all talking about him so much at Grumps's that I should be sure to know him if we met on Mount Caucasus."

"And his manege? his establishment?"

"Grand! magnificent! carriages without number, horses enough for a battalion of the guards. When shall we go over and call on him?"

"Is he arrived already? It isn't above a fortnight since he bought the estate."

"Fortnight! pooh, man, what are you thinking of?

Don't you know that he carries the lamp of Aladdin in his pocket, and can fit up a palace in a twinkling? Half the upholsterers, painters, paperers, architects, carpenters, and masons in London were down for a week, and for the last five days the proprietor has been living in a fairy palace a hundred times richer and more gorgeous than the pavilion of an Eastern king."

"The devil he has, and I all the time cooped up by the snow! I'll go over to-morrow and ask him to dinner next week."

"But his wife, Mr. Clack, has he a wife or children?"

"Faith, ma'am, I don't know; if he has any thing of the sort he keeps it very close. I rather think he's a bachelor—the roc's egg is still wanting."

"My dear Nat," said Mr. Merton, "we are very plain people; what in the world would Mr. Merivale do with a roc's egg, if he had it."

"Metaphorical—I was only metaphorical. You recollect, after the fairies had filled Aladdin's palace with every luxury he could possibly desire, his enemy the conjuror got him persuaded to ask for a roc's egg, which would have turned every thing topsy turvy, and led him the life of a dog; the roc's egg is only an allegory, and means—a wife."

"And old Lansby, old Sir Walter, what has become of him?"

"Ah, there, I think he's very foolish; he has removed to the Springfield farm, the only spot of ground

left him, and I believe he continues to be as stiff, and vain, and heartless as ever."

"Well," said Mr. Merton, "I like him the better for it. It shows there is some good stuff in him to keep up his pride in the fall of his fortunes. I never liked him as long as he was at the hall; I think I'll go and call on him now he's at the farm."

"I like that; something original there. I'll go with you. I should like to see Marius moralizing in a stack-yard, but I think 'twould have been wiser to have placed his Carthage a little farther off."

"Some more of your metaphors, Nat. Now, I think he shows his wisdom in fixing his quarters under the very nose of his successor. All men hate their successors."

"And you may depend upon it, Sir Walter will not be deficient in hating"——

"Surely, surely he won't hate Frank Merivale," said Miss Mary Merton, who had been silently listening to the conversation.

"And why not, my little sweetheart? and how do you know any thing of Mr. Merivale? and how do you know that his name is Frank? Ha! there's some mystery here."

Mr. Nathaniel, as he asked these questions, fixed his looks upon the young lady with the most penetrating expression he could muster, for it was one of his weaknesses, like Dr. Parr, to think that he had a wonderful power of eye; though, like the ocular organs of that vast pedagogue, the glances of the ungenerous

Nat were at all times rather ludicrous than commanding.

"Oh! I merely thought—that is—I think—his name—didn't you tell us his name yourself, Mr. Clack?" replied Miss Mary, stammering and blushing.

"His name, yes I certainly told you his name; but not, that I recollect of, his Christian appellation—but Frank is a very good name; so, as I was saying, depend upon it old Sir Walter will hate him with most praiseworthy bitterness, whatever be the name he rejoices in. He certainly is the most revolting old vinegar-faced rascal I ever met. I can't bring myself to utter a syllable beyond the commonplaces of society in presence of such a starched, stiff, rump'd, cold, authoritative dictator."

"Well, that's very odd, for I always thought you remarkably agreeable when Sir Walter dined with us," said Mr. Merton, utterly unconscious of the severity of his speech.

"Sir Walter was certainly very stiff and formal," continued his lady, equally unobservant of Mr. Nathaniel's chagrin; "but I have always heard he was a very respectable man."

"Exactly. Whenever you hear of a respectable man, write him down an individual to be studiously avoided. Sir Walter is the very perfection of a respectable man, spotless character, regular conduct, church twice every Sunday. People, after all, are very good-natured, and give a man credit for being virtuous, merely because he has never been convicted

of a crime. Now, if a wild young fellow like me, for instance"——

"Yes, Nat, the world is very censorious sometimes. You recollect what a noise there was when you broke off with the Lancashire heiress?"

"Recollect it? to be sure I do. They said I was wild, cruel, fickle, vain; 'pon my honour I was nothing of the kind. I certainly paid the girl a great deal of attention, and we certainly appeared to be mutually attached; but you know, my dear madam"——

"Oh yes," replied Mrs. Merton, "I know all about it. She was engaged all the time to her handsome cousin, and tried to hide it by flirting with you. I think it was very improper behaviour, and that you were greatly to be pitied, for I remember ill-natured people laughed at you very much."

The little man looked very much disconcerted by this uncomplimentary version of the anecdote, which nevertheless was the true one, and took no notice of the lady's observation. "And who lives with old Lansby?" he went on, turning to Mr. Merton.

"Only his daughter, Miss Julia."

"Tall and straight as a poplar tree," replied Mr. Nat—"the father in petticoats, with the same coldness, stiffness, pride; they must be quite happy in each other's society."

"They are!" exclaimed Miss Mary, whose fair brow had for some time been gathering with a frown—"It can only be the weak and the frivolous who can accuse Julia Lansby of coldness or pride. There never was a nobler girl in the world; so meek, so hum-

ble, so self-denying, and at the same time so beautiful. Every new misfortune that befalls the family seems only to call forth new powers to enable her to support it."

"Hem," replied Mr. Nathaniel, "we've got into dangerous ground here. I assure you, my dear Miss Mary, I meant no disrespect to your excellent and amiable friend. She may be all you say, and a thousand things more, only don't you allow yourself that in general society she is a little stately or so; a little haughty as it were—and imperial? For my own part, I prefer livelier sorts of beauties—people who are ready to laugh, and occasionally descend from their stilts—Miss Lansby's smile"——

"Is beautiful," interrupted Miss Mary.

"May be so—but 'pon honour, when she smiles in answer to any observation I make to her, I can't help thinking that there's a kind of a—sort of a—don't you remark?—a kind of pity as it were, or almost—as I may say—contempt"——

"Oh no," said Mrs. Merton; "I dare say a great many young ladies do that when you speak to them, but I am sure Miss Lansby is too amiable to despise any thing, or, at all events, too well bred to show it."

"Well, thank God! here comes my mutton chop," exclaimed Mr. Nathaniel, quite discomfited by the unintentional hits he received from the one-idea'd Mrs. Merton; "and after I have finished it, I will join you, my old fellow, in a single pint of claret."

"We shall be happy to see you in the drawing-room," replied the lady, and followed by her daughter, she left the gentlemen to themselves.

CHAPTER II.

THE old man was sitting in a high backed oaken chair, his hands folded before him, and his eyelids closely pressed together, but evidently not in sleep—the motions of his lips and the fitful contraction of his brow, showed that the spirit was busy within. At a table beside him sat a young lady, with a shade of settled melancholy visible on her subdued yet noble features. She turned her eyes every now and then from the paper on which she appeared to be sketching, with an expression of anxious affection, to the troubled countenance of her companion. The room they sat in was small, and very plainly furnished—the sky was fierce and stormy, and occasionally the old casements rattled loudly when a wilder burst of wind than usual sent a dash of sleet and hail against the window pane. The old man started from his recumbent position and sat upright, with his eye fixed keenly and harshly on the pale, placid face of his daughter. “Julia Lansby,” he said, “act the hypocrite no more—speak to me no more in such soothing and gentle tones, but tell me at once boldly and sincerely that—that you hate me”—“Father!”—

“There! how *dare* you call me father, which ought to be a name of reverence, of piety, of love, when you

well know that in your heart of hearts you detest me as a selfish, cold, unpitying old man?"

"You wrong me, father! Never, even in thought, has my affection wandered away from you. I have no hopes, no wishes, no regret, save as they are connected with your happiness. For my own"—here she sighed, and added, after a pause, "I am contented if I only could see you pleased with me—I have no other object now."

"And why not now? Is it because we are poor you can no longer be cheerful as you used to be—because we no longer see 'company,' as they call it, and have our ball-rooms filled with the grinning sons and daughters of vanity? The loss truly is great. I wonder not at your despair."

"Oh, father, do not torture me by speaking so unkindly. You know that the loss of fortune, that poverty itself, could never move my regrets."

"But you have deeper matters for sorrow," replied the father with an ironical sneer. "O, doubtless, you have many more griefs to weigh you down than ever fell upon me; fortune ruined—family broken—hearth left desolate—deserted by my own children, and supplanted in my own ancestral halls by a purse-proud, insulting villain, who"—

"No, not a villain, dear father, not a villain"—

"Yes, madam, a villain; I say a proud, presumptuous, insensible villain. What! and is Francis Lansby still master of that silly heart? I charged

you long ago to dismiss him from your thoughts. Julia Lansby, why have you not obeyed me?"

"I *have* obeyed you, father, in all things possible. I have submitted without a murmur to your commands. I have given you my promise never to speak to him, to write to him, to hear of him or from him, without your consent; and till this extraordinary occurrence, I knew not whether he was in England, or whether he was alive or dead."

"And he thinks by coming down hither, and overpowering us with his wealth and splendour, to make us regret having rejected the alliance of so mighty an individual as Mr. Francis Lansby Merivale. O had my son but lived, my noble, handsome Harry"—Sir Walter put his hands before his eyes on saying this, and leaned back in his chair, as if overcome with the bitterness of his reflections. And Julia was in hopes that the irritation of his temper, which had lately increased to a most distressing extent, would be soothed by the indulgence of his grief. But she was mistaken. Again, with the same cold, sarcastic sneer, he turned towards his daughter, and said, "Your meekness and resignation are truly amiable—your love to your father is so sincere—your gratitude for all his goodness to you unbounded——He has squandered away his fortune, and sunk the haughty lady of Lansby Hall into the inmate of no loftier a dwelling than this,—you must be grateful to him for having saved you from the perils of wealth. He has charged you—and now still more solemnly than ever charges

you, to banish from your remembrance, or to remember only with scorn and loathing, the wretch who has risen upon our ruins, who looks on us—gracious heavens—perhaps with pity,—but no—villain as he is, he dares not to insult us with his pity.”

“What—what has he done to deserve your anger? He thinks of you, I will answer for him, only as the friend and benefactor of his youth.” She paused, and then added, with a tone of touching and solemn dignity, “Francis Lansby thinks of you as *my* father.”

“And as such he *curses* me, or the Lansby blood has turned to milk within his veins. What has he done, you ask me? What has he *not* done to baulk and injure me? Does he not *live*? Is he not ‘a gay and prosperous gentleman,’ with hope, fame, happiness all before him, while the golden locks of my noble Harry are gone down into the dust? Why is *my* son taken from me, while Fortune showers all her blessings upon *theirs*?”

Julia looked in her father’s face as he uttered these words; but withdrew her eyes, as if horror-struck with the fierce malignity of his looks and language.

“You shudder,” he continued; “but it is not madness that makes me speak thus. See, I am cool; nay, I can smile—and why should I not? Is not the story I am now about to tell you a pleasant one? Come hither, child, and listen.—I was an only son; but my father was afraid I should be spoiled, as only sons usually are, and had my cousin to live with me, and treated us in all respects alike. Our boyhood passed

without any occurrence to call forth our characters, except that, probably from knowing his dependent situation, his manners were so soft and insinuating, that they formed a striking contrast to the manliness and independence of mine. At college, to which we went together, and where by my father's orders our intimacy was continued, we were called Lansby the proud and Lansby the gentle. I confess I felt myself flattered by the distinction. We returned home; we hated each other. At all events, I can answer for myself; for him, I scarcely think he had manliness enough to hate any thing. My mother now was growing old. She had a companion to reside with her. She was young and beautiful—surpassingly beautiful. She was a relation of my mother's—high born and poor. Ere long I perceived that my cousin Edgar was passionately in love with Helen. What right had he, the soft, the delicate, the gentle, to lift his eyes to so glorious an object as Helen Trevor? *I* loved her; and it added to the intensity of my passion to think how the insolence of my rival would be punished when I should ask the hand of the object of his passion. I did ask her hand: she refused it, and asked for my intercession with my father to secure his approbation of her marriage with my cousin. From that hour I hated both. Was I not justified! But I was revenged. Edgar was going into orders. My father had promised him the family living; the incumbent was infirm and old. They married; I gave away the bride. They lived the first half year of their

marriage in this very house. Here, in this very room, they sat and gazed on each other in the first happiness of their mutual fondness. My father died; and, shortly after the living became vacant. This Francis was then about two months old. I called upon them, and told them of the incumbent's death. I described the beauty of the parsonage, the quietness of the village; and when I saw the young mother stooping down, and in the gladness of her heart covering the child of Edgar Lansby with her kisses, I told them I had bestowed the living upon another. You start—it was the first minute of enjoyment I had had for years. But they still were happy. I gave them notice that I had put another tenant into Springfield. They left it; he procured a curacy in some distant part of the country. I married; and, even in the first months of matrimony, thought much more of their happiness than of my own. My Harry was born, and yet I felt no diminution of my hatred. At your birth I resolved, if possible, to repay to the son the agony that had been inflicted on me by the parents. I have succeeded. One after another they died; they were poor and miserable. I adopted their orphan son; I made him the companion of my children; I watched the love that grew up between you,—and when I perceived that it was too firmly settled in his heart to be eradicated, I turned him loose upon the world. I feasted on the agony of his looks, for in them I recalled the expression of his mother. And now what has it all come to? *My* boy is dead; and this wretch, this

slave, whom my bounty fed, is adopted by his mother's uncle, has purchased every mortgage upon my estate; and save for one consuming sorrow, one passion which I know from experience turns all his other feelings into gall and bitterness, he would be too happy for a mortal—successful in ambition, in love, and, above all, in revenge. Isn't this a pleasant sketch, and——Ha! what has my madness done? Wretch, wretch! I have killed my child!"

He bent over the fainting girl with his hands clasped in agony, and his whole being underwent a change. Cruel and malignant as he had truly painted himself, his love for his children was the overpowering passion of his mind. Since the death of his son, this love all concentrated in his daughter; and, however strange or unnatural it may appear, the value he set on her, the pride he took in her talents and beauty, were the very considerations which prevented him from bestowing them on any one whom, justly or unjustly, he had loaded with his hatred. He knew that, by the bar he had placed between them, her happiness was as much sacrificed as that of her cousin—and had she been indifferent to him he would not have condemned her to so much misery. Hitherto, indeed, the noble behaviour of his daughter had deceived him. Her uncomplaining meekness, her gentleness, and her dutiful submission to his will, had hidden from him the depth of the sufferings she endured. And unknown perhaps to himself, there was another ingredient in the bitterness of the hatred which he professed to entertain

for Francis Lansby. Since the astonishing change in their respective situations, her former lover had made no efforts to discover that his affection for Julia was unchanged. The thought of his being able to forget *his* daughter was more galling to Sir Walter's disposition than even his marrying her would have been.

"Waken, Julia! rouse yourself, my child; I spoke too bitterly; misfortune has made me mad. I hate him not." Whilst he uttered these exclamations, Julia slowly recovered, and looked at her father with a faint smile as if to thank him for his attempts to comfort her. "But he has forgotten us," he continued; "he thinks not of us—and why, since he has banished you from his memory—do you continue to waste a thought on *him*?"

Ere Julia Lansby had time to reply, Mr. Nathaniel Clack bustled into the room, followed more slowly by his friend Mr. Merton, and exclaimed, "Ha! something uncommon here. How do, Sir Walter?" Miss Julia, how d'ye do? Any thing happened, Miss Julia?"

"Miss Julia Lansby is suffering from a slight indisposition," replied Sir Walter, assuming even more than his usual stiffness and hauteur.

"Change of air—nothing like change of air for recovering strength. I recollect an old rascal in my own village, capital fortune once, never moved from home, bad health, nervousness, pride, anger, and all that; lost his fortune, went to another house, moved about, bustled immensely, 'gad you can't tell what a good-natured

sort of fellow the old curmudgeon became." Mr. Nat went on relating this not very well-chosen anecdote, disregarding for a time the eye of the proud old man, as it was fixed upon him with the most withering expression of contempt. At last he perceived it, stammered a little, sank his voice, and, after several attempts to clear his throat, stood mute. In the mean time Mr. Merton had been paying his compliments to Miss Julia, and now addressed himself to Sir Walter.

"Well, Sir Walter, I hope, as we are nearer neighbours than we used to be, we shall see more of each other. My Mary has begged me to make a strong entreaty for a visit from Miss Julia."

"If Julia would have pleasure in leaving her father at this time, she has my full consent. It would ill-become me to interfere with the enjoyments of the young and careless."

"Oh! if you can't spare her, of course poor Mary would never have preferred her request. She knows Julia's admirable qualities as a daughter too well for that."

"Does she? And does she indeed suppose that I am so selfish as to immure her in a desolate place like this, merely because I would not be alone? Julia, you shall return with Mr. Merton."

"You are lonely here, father—the days are dull and dark. It would be better"—

"I have said it. You shall visit Mary Merton; I shall probably have business to arrange with the new proprietor of the Hall, and perhaps it may be better

managed in your absence. Will you return her to me in a week?"

"Certainly—and in the mean time I hope the society of her old friends will be of use to her. Is it useless, Sir Walter, to ask you to dine with me on Thursday next? I intend to invite Mr. Merivale."

"Merivale? and you ask me to meet Mr. Merivale, to dine with him, talk with him, hear his voice? what?"——

"Oh, if I had known it would have been unpleasant, my dear Sir Walter, believe me I should never have mentioned the subject."

"On Thursday, did you say? Have you seen him?"

"No. We are just on our way to the Hall to pay him our respects."

"On Thursday? He will certainly accept your invitation. Julia, you will meet him; I wish you to meet him."

"Aha, Miss Julia," interrupted Mr. Clack, who had by this time recovered a portion of his volubility. "He is quite a young fellow, I understand. Many odd things have happened in that sort of way. Shouldn't be surprised if"——but the unfortunate Nathaniel was again afflicted with a total incapacity to conclude his sentence.

Visibly, as clouds over the sky, flitted dark meanings across Sir Walter's features; but by an effort he seemed to restrain himself, and went on. "You shall stay with Mrs. Merton till after Thursday; and if you

will allow me to alter my mind, I will also join your party.

“We shall be delighted I am sure. Can Miss Julia accompany us now? My close carriage is at the door, and on our return from the Hall we can guard her over the snow.”

Sir Walter bowed at this offer; seemed to swallow some proud speech he was about to make; and with a look of ineffable disdain to the now quite chop-fallen Mr. Nat, said—“Miss Lansby has still a carriage. She shall go to Merton Manor whenever her preparations are completed, and on Thursday I shall see my child again.”

There was no gainsaying any thing advanced in the authoritative manner which Sir Walter habitually assumed; so, in a few minutes, the gentlemen were on their way to the hall—Mr. Nathaniel Clack muttering all the time curses not loud but deep, and feeling a relief on leaving what he called the old tyrant’s presence, pretty much akin to what we should consider the sensations of a monkey which by some miracle has made its escape from a tiger’s den.

CHAPTER III.

“THIS, then, decides my fate for happiness or misery,” said Mr. Francis Lansby Merivale, as he rose from his writing-desk, where many piles of paper were lying in most admired disorder. “The estate is once more disencumbered, and the directions of my benefactor complied with, in restoring the old hall to its rightful owner. What then? my cause is still more hopeless than before. Even if I prove to him that it is the will of the person leaving me this fortune that the property should be returned into his hands, I know his indomitable pride so well, that the gift will be viewed as an insult; and without Julia, what happiness is it to me to revel in useless wealth? Oh! for the glorious days back again when I was still the dependent of Sir Walter—still the companion of my Julia!” The packet, which he folded up and directed to Springfield Farm, seemed a very voluminous one. The letter which accompanied it contained these words:—

“The estrangement of the last two years has not obliterated from my heart the kindness of the protector of my childhood. With my whole heart I thank you for the home you afforded me when other home there was none for me to fly to; and frown not if at

this hour, before I banish myself for ever from the scene of all the memories of my youth, I guard myself against any suspicion of a wish to conciliate your favour by the step I now take. The Lansby blood flows as proudly in my veins as in your own.— You would spurn me, as I know I should deserve to be spurned, if you fancied I had endeavoured to *purchase* a reconciliation. Deeply as I should value your friendship, and unchanged as are my sentiments on a subject to which I cannot trust myself to allude, I cannot, even if your favour were accorded me, accept of it without an explanation of your conduct. I tell you, Sir Walter Lansby, that your conduct has been cruel and unjust. In the pursuit of a selfish gratification you have ruined the happiness of the person who ought to be—nay, I will do you the justice to admit, who is—the dearest to you on earth. Do you deny it? Look to the wan cheek and wasting form of her who was once—but enough of this. The estate is now your own. The will of Mr. Merivale is enclosed for your perusal. Think not that I entertain a thought that this change in our positions will produce any change on your determination. If you can go on inflicting, I will show you that I can continue to suffer. From this hour you shall hear of me no more; but neither time nor distance shall make me forget for a moment the being to whom I consider myself united in the sight of heaven. Sir Walter Lansby, she is mine by vows indissoluble save in the grave, by affections which grew with our growth, and are unchangeable

while the hearts which nourished them continue to beat. But if it will add to the piquancy of your triumph, I will not conceal from you that you have driven me, as well as that other one, to despair; that you have made life to me a desert, as it has long been a solitude to her. And now what remains for me. Wealth which I cannot enjoy; youth which will waste away in misery; and, bitterer perhaps than all, a consciousness that these injuries are inflicted by one whom I have ever loved—and whom I have never offended.”

The Thursday appointed for the party at last arrived. With a degree of secrecy which entirely eclipsed the “Wonder” of Mrs. Centlivre’s comedy, the two young ladies had given no hint of the identity of young Frank Lansby and the present proprietor of the hall. Mr. Merton and his friend Mr. Clack had been refused admittance on the morning of their call, and no answer had been returned to the note of invitation which Mr. Merton had despatched on the succeeding day.

“Devilish queer fellow this Mr. Merivale,” said Mr. Nat. “He might have sent an answer to a civil note at all events, if he wouldn’t let us into his cursed gimcrack of a house; in the snow too. Well, hope he’ll come after all—drop in on us—something new in that—eh?”

“Well, I hope he will; but I suspect the meeting will be a very odd one between him and Sir Walter.”

“D——d old tyrant,” muttered Nat.

“It will be very queer to see the first salutation

exchanged between the old possessor and the new one."

"Said the old jackdaw to the young jackdaw," interrupted Mr. Clack.

"Come, Nat, out with your best stories. Have all your smiles and similes ready, for here some of the party come."

Sir Walter came among the rest; stately, solemn, stiff as ever. He paid his respects to the assembled guests, then looked anxiously round for his daughter, led her up to one of the windows, gazed earnestly into her face, and clasping her in his arms, imprinted a kiss upon her brow.

"Egad! old Iceberg's beginning to thaw," whispered Mr. Nat into the ear of Mary Merton, for already he had begun to lose the power of very audible conversation.

"I am sorry, Sir Walter," said Mr. Merton, "we are disappointed of Mr. Merivale. It would have given me great pleasure, though I have not the honour of knowing him myself, to have been the medium of an introduction between such near neighbours."

"Not know him, Mr. Merton? Well, in that case I believe I have the advantage of you. I know him intimately." Julia looked inquiringly, but unobserved, into her father's face when he said this, but the features were as rigid and inflexible as ever.

Mr. Merton also must have thought there was something forbidding in his countenance, for he changed the conversation as quickly as possible.

"I hope you can spare Julia to us a few days longer," said Mrs. Merton.

"Your kindness to my Julia is very great. We are not ungrateful for it. But she returns with me to-night."

"To night? Oh! I hope not."

"There are circumstances that require her immediate return to Lansby—to Springfield Farm, I mean—I sometimes forget how changed we are."

"O, not to-night, Sir Walter. Mr. Merton or Mr. Clack will be so happy to drive her over to-morrow."

"There are persons in this neighbourhood, madam, who make it desirable that Miss Julia Lansby should be under a father's eye."

"The cursed old bashaw," said Mr. Nat, but this time to himself; "confound me, if he doesn't think his daughter may take a fancy to *me*." Mr. Nat gave a look to the mirror, and pulled forward his wig.

But Julia knew too well the meaning of her father's speech. With a sigh she resigned herself to her fate, and going to the dining-room, Mary Merton thought she saw the dark eyes of her friend moistened with tears.

What could have been the meaning of her father's conduct in first forbidding her to think of Francis Lansby, and then in sending her to Merton Manor, for the express purpose, as it were, of throwing her in his way? And why had Francis Lansby not come to see his old friends the Mertons, even if he had had no

expectation of finding her there? These, and five hundred other thoughts, but all coming to the same hopeless conclusion, occupied her all the time of dinner. There seemed to be a universal dulness spread over the party. Even Mr. Clack had very little conversation, and that only in a whisper. The liveliest person of the party was Sir Walter Lansby himself. As if in bravado of his fallen fortunes, he was more cheerful than ever he had been in his palmiest days. But his daughter, who was acquainted with all the phases of his character, saw that his liveliness was assumed, and she dreaded the reaction which was sure to follow so unnatural an effort.

But once the name of Merivale was mentioned, some person casually inquired if there were not a Devonshire family of that name distantly connected with the Lansbys.

"There may be, sir," replied Sir Walter; "and as a person said of his connexions, the more *distant* they are the better."

The rareness of an attempt at humour on the part of Sir Walter Lansby compensated for the pooriness of its quality. There was a general laugh at the reply.

"Now, confound me," said Mr. Nat to his neighbour, "if there is any thing to laugh at in what old Chrononhoton has said. A man who has any reputation for wit may say five thousand better things every hour of the day, but really witticisms from some people are so common that people take no notice of them. But only let a dull, formal, pedantic old blockhead

give utterance to the very oldest Joe Miller, and the thing strikes people as a sort of miracle. The man will die a wit on the reputation of a miserable story badly told."

The gentleman to whom Mr. Nathaniel addressed himself was not endowed with any superfluity of metaphysical acumen, and looked most wonderfully contented with Mr. Nat's explanation.

"Don't you think so?" continued Mr. Clack.

"Think what, my dear sir?"

"Why, that the novelty or unexpetedness is every thing. You don't expect to see pigs play on the fiddle?"

"No—who the devil does?"

"Nor porcupines to make watches?"

"No."

"But if you saw porcupines making watches, or pigs playing on fiddles, you would think it very remarkable, wouldn't you?"

"To be sure I should."

"Ah!" said Nat, quite triumphant, "I was certain you would agree with me in thinking Sir Walter's rejoinder a very poor one."

The gentleman looked at Nat, and wondered very much, but said nothing.

At length the tedious night wore on, and, greatly to the satisfaction of the host and hostess, not to mention the now reanimated Mr. Clack, "they walked alone the banquet hall deserted." Julia saw by her father's manner that something very unusual had

either happened or was about to happen. Her friend Mary Merton shared in her apprehensions, and has very often mentioned her fears, after she had heard of the catastrophe of that night. Old Sir Walter sat moodily silent beside his daughter. She, deeply absorbed in her own thoughts, took no notice of the pace they were going at, or even of the carriage in which they were conveyed. At length her eye caught the trees of the short avenue that led from the road to Springfield farm ; but still the carriage rolled on. She now began to observe that the chariot was very different from the one in which she had made her visit to Merton Manor ; and on looking round to her father, for every thing was visible by the light of a clear frosty moon, she saw that he was intently watching her countenance.

“ You don’t ask me, Julia, where we are going,” he said ; “ you see we have passed the farm ? ”

“ I saw we had passed it.”

“ And have you no wish to know where we are going ? ”

“ Where ? ”

“ To the hall. Where should Sir Walter Lansby take his daughter to but to Lansby Hall ? ”

Julia half shrieked as he said this, and now knew that her worst fears were realized.

“ Oh, not there ! ” she cried, “ not there ! ”

“ And why not ? Give me your hand, my daughter ; are you not safe in the protection of your father ? ”

“ But Frank—but Mr. Merivale ”——

"I will speak to him in the house of my ancestors as they would wish me to speak."

The lodge at the gate was full of lights ; the gate wide open, and they rapidly approached the front door of the hall. Julia, in an agony of apprehension, not diminished by her astonishment, suffered her father to lead her through the vestibule, up the great staircases, along the corridor, and opening the door of the library, they saw standing ready to receive them Mr. Francis Lansby Merivale.

Julia leant trembling on her father's arm—Frank stood as if expecting Sir Walter to begin the conversation. He drew his daughter closer to him, paused for a moment, then laying her hand within that of Francis Lansby, said,—“Julia, your cousin—my children!”

His own agitation prevented him from seeing the effect of his speech upon his daughter. “I told you, Francis Lansby, when I called here in answer to the letter you had sent me, with the documents restoring this estate to me again, that to accept it was impossible, unless for the purpose of conveying it to my child. My pride is broken as by a thunder-bolt. Take her. I thought it was impossible for the hatred of a Lansby to suffer decay—but, nay, no thanks, your letter was a just reproof. When the ceremony is over, I shall return to the farm, and find consolation in reflecting that the son of Helen Trevor is the happy husband of the daughter of Walter Lansby.”

“Well, only think,” said Mr. Nathaniel Clack, as

he heard the circumstances a few days after the party, "only think how odd it is that that frozen automaton has some humane feelings after all. I shouldn't be surprised, now that he has discovered how pleasant it is to be generous and good-natured, if he were even a tolerable companion at dinner."

"Shall we ask him to meet you here when you return?" said Mr. Merton.

"No, thank ye; I must have farther proofs yet of his return to the pale of civilization."

"Why, I thought he was very merry even on Thursday last," said Mrs. Merton; "you recollect what a funny thing he said—what was it again? I always forget witty speeches, but at all events he must have been the wittiest person at table, for I recollect he created the greatest laugh."

"Fools generally succeed best in raising a laugh," said Mr. Clack, with a philosophical toss of the head.

"Ah! that's just what I tell my Mary; for really, Mr. Clack, she goes on giggling and laughing whenever you open your lips."

"Well, well," said Mr. Merton, "let us all go over some day next week, and call at Springfield farm. By that time the old man will be left to his own reflections, and after so good an action and such a triumph over his evil passions, his reflections; I should think, must be very pleasant ones."

THE END.

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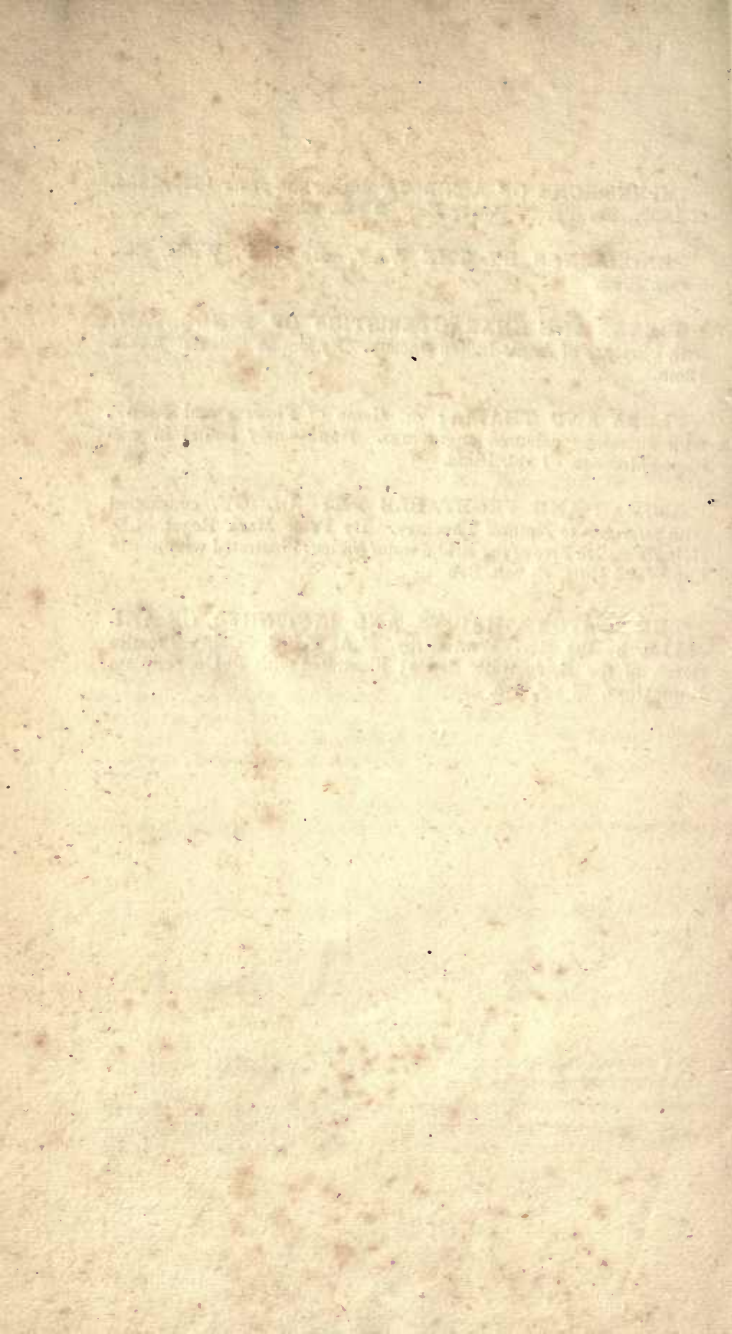
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